



**Media Analysis Report
Monday, September 18, 2017
DR-4332-TX**

Hot Issues –

- **Housing** – For the past several days there has been an increasing amount of frustration being vented toward housing issues. In many cases, such as the article listed below, the survivors say they've been made homeless, without any options and very little assistance.

Thousands of Low-Income Residents in Flooded Port Arthur Suffer Slow FEMA Aid

By Phil McKenna – [InsideClimateNews](#) –September 17, 2017

More than two weeks after a plea from the mayor of Port Arthur, Texas—"Our whole city is under water"—went viral, thousands of flooded-out residents remained homeless, and community leaders, angry with the speed of the federal government's response, were considering a former youth correctional facility for housing. The government began installing large, temporary tents for groups of residents to stay in while more permanent arrangements could be made. In the weeks after the storm, residents had struggled to find housing. "They are living wherever they can lay their heads at this particular point—garages, with relatives, with friends, in cars, you name it," Hilton Kelley, director of Community in Power and Development Association, said. "Infants, the handicapped are also homeless. We have a lot of elderly folks; all of them are homeless."

Noteworthy issues:

'We are human beings like everyone else'

By Marina Riker – [Victoria Advocate](#) –September 17, 2017

Alexa's hope of living a normal life in the United States with her 11-year-old daughter came crashing down with the tree that landed on her home during Hurricane Harvey. Just two years ago, the mother and daughter moved from Mexico to Bloomington, a rural community of about 2,500 residents. Alexa bought a trailer, her daughter started school and the two started settling into their new life in the U.S., she said. But all that changed when Hurricane Harvey destroyed almost everything the family owned...

Live Q&A session with FEMA representative

[KRIS-TV](#) –September 18, 2017

...Tonight, join Lee Sausley along with a representative from FEMA for a Facebook Live questions and answer session. Submit questions when the live video begins or post them directly to our Facebook page throughout the day at www.facebook.com/KRIS6News. The KRISTV.COM application is available now on the App Store™ and Android App Store.

Media Monitoring Trends –

Print/Online –

- The so-called average survivor has been telling both print and online media outlets that the recovery process has been especially hard. Whether it's difficulty communicating with insurance companies, sorting through debris in flood-ravaged homes, or a multitude of obstacles that make "normal" seem like a near impossible task, recovering from a hurricane has survivors feeling frustrated and exhausted by everything.
- According to several print media articles, the immigration status of survivors, especially those, who were living in some of the state's most gravely impacted communities, is starting to become a problem, because many of those families are now scared to seek assistance as it might result in deportation.
- When not discussing the obstacles associated with post-Harvey cleanup, print media remains committed to the more charitable side of disaster recovery. Animal rescues continue to capture the bulk of the headlines, but there's still a significant amount of concerts, food drives, and home repairs slipping into the mix as communities pull together to assist those in need.

Radio/Television –

- Much like print media, broadcast media has consistently been mentioning the struggles associated with flood and hurricane recovery. One of the biggest complaints among survivors is a lack of housing and the uncertainty surrounding debris removal.
- In addition to highlighting the frustration, there are some segments that are instead acting as information sessions, giving devastated residents cleanup tips and urging families to visit a local DRC for pertinent information that could make applying for assistance a little more seamless.
- Finally, the topic of flood insurance continues to be a staple in daily reports. While the majority of those reports have triggered some negativity, there are others that have inspired survivors to be "more proactive" in obtaining a policy before the next big disaster.

Social Media –

- References to Hurricane Harvey have declined with the bulk of the posts either containing repetitive information or conversations that are similar to previous reports.
- Echoing traditional media, social media users are talking about issues related to debris removal. To further reinforce their disgust, some of the survivors have also attached videos and images of the debris, emphasizing the gravity of the situation.
- To learn more about today's social media trends, please refer to the social listening report at the end of this document.

Table of Contents –

Thousands of Low-Income Residents in Flooded Port Arthur Suffer Slow FEMA Aid	5
Live Q&A session with FEMA representative	7
'We are human beings like everyone else'.....	7
Housing Effort Poses Test for FEMA after Harvey.....	9
Houston residents, officials stew over Harvey storm-trash removal	10
Flood damage from Hurricane Harvey forces change of plans at Lone Star College.....	11
Dallas Wants To Send Its Garbage Trucks to Houston for Cleanup This Fall	14
Farmers' Insurance adjusters camp out in Texas after Harvey	14
Harvey dumped record-setting 34 trillion gallons of rain.....	16

Free water testing for well owners in Harvey flood areas	17
AP Exclusive: Evidence of Spills at Toxic Site During Floods.....	17
Insurance Council of Texas Says	20
Study Finds FEMA Flood Maps Missed 75% of Houston Flood Damage Claims between 1999 And 2009	20
Congress Can Fix Flood Insurance This Year	22
What Is the National Flood Insurance Program?	23
Many people in flood-prone areas go without insurance	25
The Politics of Harvey Relief: How Local, State Officials Are Performing So Far	26
Businesses far from the devastation can feel storm's impact	29
Central Georgians bake cookies for Harvey victims.....	31
Franklin's Backyard BBQ raises funds for Harvey relief	32
Red Cross working to move Harvey evacuees from GRB.....	33
Austin Fun Club Helps New Mom Who Lost Everything In Hurricane Harvey	34
Local bands host Harvey benefit concert.....	34
Campbell County man meets and helps Texas family devastated by Hurricane Harvey.....	35
Family mourns mom who died carrying toddler through Harvey floodwaters.....	36
Tattoo shop raises over \$23,000 for Harvey Victims	37
Nothing 'Deplorable' About Those Rescuing Harvey, Irma Victims	38
Volunteers Needed to Help Distribute Donations to Harvey Victims	40
Jersey 4 Houston Charity Basketball Game Planned for Sept. 28	41
Renee Zellweger helping Houston animals after Harvey	42
Volunteers Needed At NWA Shelter to Help With Displaced Cats From Hurricane Harvey.....	42
J.J. Watt's Hurricane Relief Fundraising Closes at More Than \$37 Million	43
This Week in Harvey Relief Efforts and Events: Grab a Free Denny's Breakfast and More	43
Area Firefighters Helped Rescue Hundreds in Hurricane Harvey Aftermath	44
Fire Department's Harvey Staffing Criticized	46
What if America Had a Detective Agency for Disasters?.....	46
The mental health impact of major disasters like Harvey and Irma.....	48
As a result of Hurricane Harvey, 600 more Texas prisoners getting AC	50
Watch out for flood-damaged vehicles when buying a used car.....	51
Hurricane Harvey – Social Listening Report.....	52

What Others Are Saying –

More than two weeks after a plea from the mayor of Port Arthur, Texas—"Our whole city is under water"—went viral, thousands of flooded-out residents remained homeless...

In the weeks after the storm, residents had struggled to find housing. "They are living wherever they can lay their heads at this particular point—garages, with relatives, with friends, in cars, you name it," Hilton Kelley, director of Community in Power and Development Association, said...

Finding temporary housing for the residents of Port Arthur has not been easy... "They are playing games with the lives of thousands of African Americans here in the city of Port Arthur," Kelley said. "I do believe that if this was a more affluent community that we would be seeing immediate action. We would see tents up, we would see trailers rolling in, and yet, now we are playing games with two raggedy barges that the Coast Guard would not even let be towed to the city of Port Arthur."

[InsideClimateNews](#), September 17, 2017

Alexa's hope of living a normal life in the United States with her 11-year-old daughter came crashing down with the tree that landed on her home during Hurricane Harvey... All Alexa can do now is try to salvage belongings from what's left of her trailer. A family member is trying to apply for FEMA on her behalf, but she doesn't know whether it will work, she said. Until then, she wishes she could find help like other Hurricane Harvey victims, she said.

"We are human beings like everyone else," said Alexa. "But there are people who just think about themselves and don't think about what others might be going through."

[Victoria Advocate](#), September 17, 2017

In the weeks since Hurricane Harvey slammed into the Texas Gulf Coast, and dumped a record-setting amount of rain on cities stretching from Corpus Christi to Houston to Port Arthur, the humanitarian response has been overwhelming and impressive...

"Due to the incredible generosity of both the North Texas area and the nation as a whole, we are now closing donations," Trusted World noted on its website. "We want to thank all of you who donated during this time. Because of you, people affected by Hurricane Harvey will receive the supplies they need."

[NBC-Dallas](#), September 18, 2017

Video/Audio –

Renee Zellweger helping Houston animals after Harvey

[ABC13](#) –September 18, 2017

HOUSTON (KTRK) -- Homeward bound! 70 cats and dogs are going on the trip of a lifetime to find their fur-ever homes in California. Since Hurricane Harvey, local shelters have been packed with more and more animals. So, volunteers with Austin Pets Alive, Houston Pet's Alive, MAD Dog Rescue and Lucy's Pet Foundation are sending animals to California that were in shelters before the hurricane hit...

Local bands host Harvey benefit concert

By Amber Treybig –[KBTX](#) –September 17, 2017

BRYAN, Tex. (KBTX)- Band members from all over the Brazos Valley came together to put on a show and raise money for a Hurricane Harvey relief fund....

Franklin's Backyard BBQ raises funds for Harvey relief

By Esmi Careaga –[FOX7-Austin](#) –September 18, 2017

As if Texans didn't have enough on their plates, last month FOX 7 News was first on scene when the iconic Franklin Barbecue caught fire. The BBQ joint closed its doors temporarily because of the structural damage to the property. However, Pitmaster Aaron Franklin isn't letting that stop him from stepping up and helping fellow Texans...

Tattoo shop raises over \$23,000 for Harvey Victims

[WDBJ](#) –September 18, 2017

COPPERAS COVE, TX. - Three tattoo artist at Chris Bailey's forever tattoos in Copperas Cove held a nine-day tattoo fundraiser earlier this month and raised over \$23,000...

Housing Effort Poses Test for FEMA after Harvey

By Dan Frosch and Laura Kusisto – [WallStreetJournal](#) –September 17, 2017

Subscription required.... Video at link above

Red Cross working to move Harvey evacuees from GRB

[ABC13](#) –September 18, 2017

HOUSTON, Texas (KTRK) -- As another week passes in the wake of Hurricane Harvey, some of the people who were driven from their homes by the storm are being moved from the large George R. Brown Convention Center to other shelters. Over the weekend, the American Red Cross said they relocated 250 people to the Chinese Community Center on Town Park Drive even though the shelter expected to take in only 200. The extra people were moved or were in the process of moving to other shelters...

Full Stories –

RECOVERY

Thousands of Low-Income Residents in Flooded Port Arthur Suffer Slow FEMA Aid

By Phil McKenna

[InsideClimateNews](#)

September 17, 2017

More than two weeks after a plea from the mayor of Port Arthur, Texas—"Our whole city is under water"—went viral, thousands of flooded-out residents remained homeless, and community leaders, angry with the speed of the federal government's response, were considering a former youth correctional facility for housing. The government began installing large, temporary tents for groups of residents to stay in while more permanent arrangements could be made.

In the weeks after the storm, residents had struggled to find housing. "They are living wherever they can lay their heads at this particular point—garages, with relatives, with friends, in cars, you name it," Hilton Kelley, director of Community in Power and Development Association, said. "Infants, the handicapped are also homeless. We have a lot of elderly folks; all of them are homeless."

Flooding from the remnants of Hurricane Harvey forced residents of the largely African American community to evacuate their homes, as well as the city's emergency shelter, after 26 inches of rain fell on August 29.

Port Arthur's residents have long struggled with environmental issues. Toxic air emissions from refineries that surround the city, including the largest oil refinery in the country, routinely release pungent emissions

that cause residents eyes and noses to sting. Now, an estimated 3,000 to 5,000 residents in the town of 55,000 are displaced. Many of them were evicted from low-income rental units that are now being gutted to prevent mold growth following the flood.

Amid the intense frustration and deprivation after the storm, community leaders are at odds with the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) over the speed of federal aid to their city, saying FEMA is to blame for the failure to provide adequate housing.

"We were delayed because we were not put on the housing list, it was just Tuesday that the order came down that they were going to release the funds for emergency housing for the city of Port Arthur," Kelley said. "We were somehow left off the damn list."

FEMA spokesman Robert Howard said Jefferson County, which includes Port Arthur, was approved for FEMA assistance starting on Aug. 30, and that all disaster housing assistance was available to Jefferson County residents at that time. The agency had provided \$12 million in assistance to 20,092 residents in Jefferson County as of Sept. 11, he said.

Port Arthur officials say additional housing assistance wasn't made available to them until Sept. 12. "Typically under lesser circumstances they are able to place survivors in hotels and apartments and other rental facilities, but because the damage was so widespread, they had to enact these other housing options," City of Port Arthur spokesperson LaRisa Carpenter said.

Port Arthur is also disadvantaged by its size when it comes to securing federal assistance. While a large city like Houston has teams of employees trained in the bureaucratic technicalities of dealing with FEMA, Port Arthur has a small staff scrambling to deal with extraordinary demands amid the flooding.

"It's local governments' responsibility to plug in and tell the state what they want but not all local governments are as resourced as major metropolitan areas like Houston and Galveston," said Lillie Coney, legislative director for U.S. Rep. Sheila Jackson Lee (D-Texas).

FEMA has to "have some resource in place to help them with the administrative burden of being able to plug in and do the things they need to do, especially a place like Port Arthur that was completely under water," she said.

Finding temporary housing for the residents of Port Arthur has not been easy.

City officials working with FEMA arranged for two barges, with berths for approximately 600 individuals, to provide temporary housing earlier this week. Inspection of the World War II-era barges by the U.S. Coast Guard, however, found safety issues, including missing guardrails, and permits for the barges were denied, causing further outrage from the community.

"They are playing games with the lives of thousands of African Americans here in the city of Port Arthur," Kelley said. "I do believe that if this was a more affluent community that we would be seeing immediate action. We would see tents up, we would see trailers rolling in, and yet, now we are playing games with two raggedy barges that the Coast Guard would not even let be towed to the city of Port Arthur."

Michael Sinegal, a county commissioner for Jefferson County said he is working with FEMA on other potential housing options, including tents, some of which are now going up, vacant stores and a former juvenile correction facility in the nearby town of Nederland that could provide temporary housing. Others have objected to the later option because it looks like a prison, but the county is running out of options, Sinegal said.

"With the housing needs we have, if we have to put some daisies around it and dress it up a little bit, if it's the only option we have, we need to use it."

Live Q&A session with FEMA representative

[KRIS-TV](#)

September 18, 2017

CORPUS CHRISTI - FEMA assistance is still available for area residents who need help in the wake of Hurricane Harvey.

If you need assistance, you can apply at DisasterAssistance.gov or by calling the FEMA helpline at 1-800-621-FEMA (1-800-621-3362). If you are eligible for an assistance grant, you do not have to pay that grant back.

FEMA resource center

Many residents have sent in questions regarding the FEMA process, and KRIS 6 News is giving residents a chance to ask questions directly to a FEMA representative.

Tonight, join Lee Sausley along with a representative from FEMA for a Facebook Live questions and answer session.

Submit questions when the live video begins or post them directly to our Facebook page throughout the day at www.facebook.com/KRIS6News.

The KRISTV.COM application is available now on the App Store™ and Android App Store.

'We are human beings like everyone else'

By Marina Riker

[Victoria Advocate](#)

September 17, 2017

Alexa's hope of living a normal life in the United States with her 11-year-old daughter came crashing down with the tree that landed on her home during Hurricane Harvey.

Just two years ago, the mother and daughter moved from Mexico to Bloomington, a rural community of about 2,500 residents.

Alexa bought a trailer, her daughter started school and the two started settling into their new life in the U.S., she said.

But all that changed when Hurricane Harvey destroyed almost everything the family owned. For the past three weeks, Alexa has been trying to pick up the pieces - a difficult task because she doesn't qualify for federal assistance.

"We are starting from zero," Alexa said in Spanish. "Little by little, it will get better."

Alexa didn't want to be identified by her real name for fear of being discovered by federal immigration authorities - a fear that was amplified in the midst of Hurricane Harvey, when many undocumented immigrants were forced to seek resources and shelter provided by the federal government.

Hurricane Harvey destroyed thousands of homes from Corpus Christi to Houston - a city home to an estimated 575,000 undocumented immigrants, according to the Pew Research Center.

Even though federal officials said undocumented residents would be protected from immigration enforcement at disaster shelters, some people were afraid to seek help.

The storm struck South Texas when undocumented communities were already on high alert. Earlier this year, Gov. Greg Abbott signed a law that allows police to inquire about the immigration status of people they detain. The law was scheduled to go into effect Sept. 1 - just days after thousands of people lost their homes - but the law was temporarily halted.

"I do know that people are sometimes afraid to ask for assistance because they're afraid they might be reported to authorities," said Jann Tracey, a spokeswoman for the Federal Emergency Management Agency.

Whether undocumented immigrants seek shelter or apply for financial help to fix damaged homes, FEMA will not report their citizenship status to authorities, Tracey said.

"I think it's important for people to know that we don't report information to immigration services - nothing like that," she said.

Despite emergency officials' assurance, some families in Victoria County are still frightened.

For the past two weeks, Carl Dube has been installing tarps on damaged roofs and ripping out soaked insulation in Bloomington, where at least one-fifth of residents live in poverty, according to census estimates. So far, the volunteer has run into two undocumented families who lost their homes and were scared to ask FEMA for help, he said.

"They had been here awhile and bought property and put trailers on there," said Dube, who works with the Mennonite Disaster Service. "But that's all they had."

Even if one family member might qualify, undocumented families often lack proper paperwork needed to apply for assistance, he said. Or they're simply too afraid to ask for help in the first place.

"A lot of the time they're afraid to admit it - afraid to get their names anywhere," said Dube.

But all it takes is one person for an entire household to receive FEMA assistance, said the agency's spokeswoman. Parents and guardians can apply for assistance on behalf of a child who was born here, said Tracey.

"No information will be gathered on the adult's status," she said. "But the parent will be asked to sign a (document)."

There are also exceptions for people who have green cards, she said. Noncitizens who are given special designations such as refugee status, asylum status or are victims of domestic violence may also qualify for help.

But for those who don't qualify for financial assistance, finding resources in Victoria County is a challenge.

Despite hundreds of people losing their homes and apartments to Hurricane Harvey, there are no disaster shelters in the entire county. Most residents, like Alexa, were forced to rely on family, friends and volunteer groups for shelter and supplies.

All Alexa can do now is try to salvage belongings from what's left of her trailer. A family member is trying to apply for FEMA on her behalf, but she doesn't know whether it will work, she said.

Until then, she wishes she could find help like other Hurricane Harvey victims, she said.

"We are human beings like everyone else," said Alexa. "But there are people who just think about themselves and don't think about what others might be going through."

Advocate reporter Ismael Perez contributed to this report.

Housing Effort Poses Test for FEMA after Harvey

By Dan Frosch and Laura Kusisto

[CetusNews](#)

September 17, 2017

The effort to find both temporary and long-term housing for the tens of thousands of people displaced by Harvey is already one of the largest missions the Federal Emergency Management Agency has undertaken.

It is also a major test for how the agency handles housing issues since being criticized for its sluggish response to Hurricane Katrina in 2005.

So far, FEMA has approved more than \$460 million in aid to those affected by the storm, much of which includes money to pay for housing assistance or hotel rooms for tens of thousands of people.

By comparison, Hurricane Katrina was more devastating, destroying an estimated 300,000 homes, resulting in the deaths of more than 1,800 people and displacing approximately 700,000. Federal officials say subsequent overhauls and changes will help FEMA's response to Harvey.

Following Katrina, many people evacuated to Houston and ended up staying there—filling up apartments and providing a boost to the local real-estate market, but hurting New Orleans economically. In Houston, local politicians, tenant advocates and displaced people all cite the thousands of trailers used to house people in the aftermath of Katrina as something to be avoided. But given the challenge of finding people hotel rooms and affordable apartments for the long term, experts said the use of those trailers is likely inevitable.

Can the federal government afford to insure homes that face repeated flooding? Already roughly \$25 billion in debt, the National Flood Insurance Program is facing massive new claims following hurricanes Irma and Harvey. WSJ's Shelby Holliday reports. Photo: Getty

FEMA ordered about 4,500 manufactured-housing units after Harvey, and it could order more for Irma victims, according to Patti Boerger, spokeswoman for the Manufactured Housing Institute.

The agency didn't immediately respond to a request for comment on the number of trailers it has ordered.

At least some of the trailers are expected to be placed in rural areas, not in Houston, which like most cities doesn't easily lend itself to parking mobile homes in people's yards.

Trailers were criticized after Katrina when people complained they made them sick and a class-action lawsuit resulted in a \$43 million settlement for 55,000 Gulf Coast resident after elevated levels of formaldehyde were found in the trailers.

They are also expensive to taxpayers, costing roughly \$70,000 to \$100,000 to purchase, set up and eventually haul off, according to John Henneberger, co-director of Texas Low Income Housing Information Service, who won a MacArthur Fellowship for his work on inequalities in the housing recovery from Hurricane Ike.

Houston residents, officials stew over Harvey storm-trash removal

[The Gazette](#)

September 17, 2017

HOUSTON — Disposing of the mounds of debris lining Houston streets three weeks after Hurricane Harvey flooding damaged about 126,000 homes is riling residents and officials in the nation's fourth largest city.

The sheer volume of work is overwhelming initial efforts, say residents, resulting in pleas from officials for the state and private contractors to contribute vehicles. Houston also is offering to increase its fees for emergency trash removal to bring in more waste disposal trucks.

"We have been asking for more trucks for weeks," said Greg Travis, a Houston city council member whose hard-hit west Houston district had just two trucks operating one day this week. There is no schedule of collections nor estimate when one would be available, he said.

Houston's trash haulers are working side-by-side with a disaster contractor's crews from San Antonio and Austin, Texas. The city's size, about 627 square miles (1623.92 square kilometers), is larger than Los Angeles or New York.

Across Texas, the debris left behind by the storm could reach 200 million cubic yards — enough to fill up a football stadium almost 125 times, Texas Governor Greg Abbott estimated on Thursday. Harvey's path up the Texas coast killed as many as 82 people, flooding homes and businesses with up to 51 inches of rain.

"We have no idea when it's going to be picked up," said Houston resident David Greely, 51. "It's overwhelming."

DRC Emergency Services LLC, the city's contractor for emergency trash removal, has about 300 trucks operating in Houston and surrounding areas, according to President John Sullivan.

“We’ll reach 500 trucks in the next few days,” he said.

Houston is renegotiating its contract to expedite the work, Alan Bernstein, a spokesman for Mayor Sylvester Turner, said on Friday.

An 8.9 percent temporary property-tax increase proposed this week by the mayor would pay for damage to city property and for costs not covered by the United States. Turner estimated the cost of debris removal is \$200 million.

Contract renegotiations are common during disasters, according to DRC’s Sullivan.

“There has been price adjustments for debris contractors across Texas for Harvey recovery, not just Houston,” he said.

Some well-to-do neighborhoods have begun considering paying for private trash haulers to pick up the debris.

“I don’t know if I’m on the city’s list for trash cleanup,” said Eric Olafson, 62, who added his neighbors are discussing paying private contractors to remove their debris.

Flood damage from Hurricane Harvey forces change of plans at Lone Star College

By Lindsay Ellis |
[HoustonChronicle](#)
September 17, 2017

For three decades at Lone Star College's Kingwood campus, Steve Davis has looked students in the eyes as he taught the Reconstruction era and World War II in his American history courses. This semester, he worries he'll never see their faces.

About 600 in-person courses at Lone Star College-Kingwood, including Davis', will move at least partially online after Hurricane Harvey plowed floodwater and sewage through many campus buildings late last month, causing millions of dollars in damage and requiring the major change to course schedules. Before Harvey, the campus scheduled 28 percent of its classes to take place partially or fully online. That figure is now 73 percent.

The decision forced an abrupt training of many professors who had never taught online before and required the college to find class space in facilities from local churches to the student center before the semester begins Sept. 25.

Davis said he's anxious about leaping into online education abruptly. He has never held an online class - and like many other faculty at Lone Star College-Kingwood, he had never been trained to do so before this week. A few colleges and universities have moved to online operations in times of crisis over the last decade, but digital learning experts characterize that decision as reactionary, not a pre-planned strategy.

"I know I'm a really good teacher," he said. "It's going to be hard for me to be an average teacher, to do this quick transition to this. ... The stress is coming from a feeling of worry that I'm not going to be as good as I want to be."

Faculty learned how to host discussions virtually, how often to respond to student emails and when to pick up the phone or schedule a video call. Professors, many of whom were familiar with the digital system from online grading and other course management programs, are now assessing how many students do not have reliable internet access. The college could not estimate that figure or assess how many faculty members completed training this week.

'Planning as we go'

Professors and administrators acknowledge several reasons why moving to a heavily online semester was a good option for Lone Star College-Kingwood, which enrolled more than 12,000 students each semester last year.

First, about a fifth of those students generally take courses online each semester, making the process familiar, the campus president said. Second, at least one study has shown that a significant percentage of community college students who take time off from their education don't return to finish their degree. Administrators and faculty, then, had to make every effort to hold classes, they say.

Kingwood campus president Katherine Persson said in an interview that Lone Star had not expected that Harvey would halt campus operations for so long.

"No one ever thinks they're going to lose 80 percent of their facilities in a weekend," Persson said. "Maybe when all this is over, I'll have sage words to offer. But right now, we're planning as we go."

Harvey had brought more than 30 inches of rain to Kingwood over three days, isolating the neighborhood from other parts of the city as high waters submerged streets.

Repairs to campus will span the semester. Six of nine buildings took on floodwater, and an additional building lost power. Damage is estimated at about \$15 million, including the loss of life-size medical mannequins that simulate childbirth for nursing students and 12 dental seats for dental hygiene students.

After the rains subsided, administrators met around a dean's kitchen table to assess damage and examine the semester's course offerings, Persson said.

Some available rooms in a student center and music building will turn into classrooms. Facilities from local churches to a rehabilitation hospital will also host in-person classes, said David Baty, vice president of instruction, in an email. Organizing which courses will be held where is the last stage of planning for the semester.

Besides the move online, Harvey required faculty to trim courses to fit in a shorter semester and operate without office space. Speakers and extracurricular events will be cancelled, faculty say, including author visits.

Same skills apply

Just two students of more than 100 have dropped from professor Daniel Coleman's fall classes, he said.

Internet service has been out at Coleman's home in Westbury since Aug. 26, and this week he uploaded tests for his online religion classes from the priest's office at Grace Episcopal Church in Willowbend, where he could use Wi-Fi.

Coleman has taught online classes for years, he said, and even for in-person world religions classes, he uploads lectures along with Buddhist and Hindu prayers for student review off campus. Teaching online, like in-person, requires clear communication with students, he said. He sometimes asks students to call him.

"The foundation is learning the technological end," he said, "but the same skills that apply in a regular classroom apply in an online classroom, too."

Online learning has helped college students continue taking classes through crisis for more than a decade, but education technology experts say few universities and colleges are prepared to immediately switch to heavily online operations after a natural disaster.

New Orleans students took online classes financed by the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation the semester after Hurricane Katrina, and a report by that foundation said University of Hong Kong students used distance education during the SARS epidemic, too.

"It's often a seat-of-the-pants response," said Robert Ubell, vice dean emeritus for online learning at the NYU Tandon School of Engineering. "But because it's a seat-of-the-pants response, it's quite extraordinary for them to have done it."

With last-minute preparations, however, course quality may suffer, said Scott McLeod, an educational leadership professor at the University of Colorado Denver.

"A large number of faculty have been allowed to not engage in online learning in any way," he said. "Which means, all of a sudden, their learning curve is sharp in a compressed period of time."

Kaleigh VonDerVor, Lone Star College-Kingwood's director of professional development, said faculty should not have been required to learn how to teach online as a preemptive measure.

Professors should be free to use their limited professional development time to develop skills of their choice, she said.

"We couldn't have anticipated this, ever," she said, adding that she is not familiar with any institution training all faculty to teach online.

'We don't have a choice'

Still, some students who had paid tuition before Harvey do not have high expectations for the semester, though they will stay enrolled. Kingwood resident Wendy Curts said her 18-year-old daughter is starting her freshman year this fall and will remain enrolled for core classes.

She registered for in-person classes, Curts said, because she worried online learning would heighten her tendency to procrastinate. Her daughter would have attended a different college or university had she known her courses would be online, Curts said.

"I've already paid for it - we don't have a choice," she said.

Faculty said they plan to schedule in-person meet ups throughout the semester to say hello to their students and answer questions face to face.

Davis, the American history professor, emailed students on Wednesday, urging them to meet him at a Starbucks in Kingwood on Thursday.

"I would love to meet you and will answer your questions to the best of my ability," he wrote. "This semester is certainly going to be a challenge, but maybe it's a comfort if we all realize there's no way we can do as horribly as the Texans did last Sunday (against the Jaguars)."

Dallas Wants To Send Its Garbage Trucks to Houston for Cleanup This Fall

By Molly Evans

[KeraNews](#)

September 18, 2017

Five stories that have North Texas talking: Dallas helps Houston in next phase; bright, squishy blobs made this Dallas artist Instagram famous; Bono's getting an award from the Bush Center; and more.

Dallas plans to send garbage trucks and sanitation workers to Houston this fall to help with post-Harvey cleanup.

In Sunday's "Lone Star Politics" on KXAS, Mayor Mike Rawlings said he's proud of how Dallas has contributed to recovery efforts since the hurricane hit the coast just over three weeks ago.

The city has temporarily housed nearly 4,000 South Texans, including evacuees from Houston after the hurricane brought unprecedented flooding. As of Friday's count from the American Red Cross, just over 2,000 people were still taking refuge in D-FW shelters.

The next opportunity to help the state's largest city is trash removal. Rawlings said Houston Mayor Sylvester Turner asked for extra hands. San Antonio and Austin are already on board.

Officials estimate that 126,000 homes in Houston need debris removed.

The Dallas Morning News reports that "Dallas' help to Houston will mean changes in pickup for Dallas residents, who probably will have to separate bulky trash and brush for separate removal to offset the loss of trucks that will be in Houston."

City Council will consider the matter in its Sept. 27 meeting. If approved, Dallas garbage trucks will be in Houston around Oct. 1 and be deployed for at least 30 days. The federal government will reimburse the city. [The Dallas Morning News, KXAS]

Farmers' Insurance adjusters camp out in Texas after Harvey

By Andrea Rumbaugh

[Waco Tribune](#)

September 17, 2017

HOUSTON — To process tens of thousands of auto and property claims with losses already well into the billions of dollars, insurance companies have adjusters camping out across Texas.

The Houston Chronicle reports in one case, the adjusters — many of whom are called in from out of state due to the magnitude of the effort — are living in tents.

Farmers Insurance sent more than 400 catastrophe insurance responders to assist with Hurricane Harvey-related claims. About 80 of them have quartered at “Farmers Village,” a camp in Rosharon where newcomers are greeted with maps of their air-conditioned cabanas, the food tavern, fishing area and putting greens. A fuel station allows employees to fill up rental cars, and Adirondack chairs overlooking the lake are popular for unwinding after 12-hour days. But mostly, the tents put them relatively close to their work while also freeing up hotel space for families flooded out of their homes.

The plan was developed after 2008’s Hurricane Ike when catastrophe adjusters had to stay in the homes of local insurance agents. It was tested in California after a fire, but Harvey is the camp’s first large-scale deployment.

“It was always designed for a major hurricane that hit Houston when truly much of the infrastructure was knocked down,” chief claims officer Keith Daly said. “In this case, much of the infrastructure wasn’t knocked down, but there’s still that hotel aspect.”

The Farmers adjusters are handling 38,000 claims throughout Texas and roughly 15,000 in the Houston area. The insurer expects to have made contact with all affected customers by the end of this month, though it will have adjusters in Houston through the remainder of this year. As people begin rebuilding, they often find additional damages to report.

Farmers is not the only company working its way through a logjam of flooded cars and wind-battered roofs. State Farm customers have filed roughly 34,400 automobile claims and 39,900 property claims in Texas. The Texas Windstorm Insurance Association, the insurer of last resort for wind and hail coverage along the coast, reported 55,664 claims.

Those numbers don’t include flooded homes. The federal government provides flood insurance, and more than 83,600 National Flood Insurance Program claims have been filed in Texas. Some \$174 million has thus far been issued as advance payments, according to the Federal Emergency Management Agency.

“In Houston, it’s absolutely flood and cars,” Daly said.

Farmers CEO Jeff Dailey was in Houston on Tuesday to support his employees. Outside a home in Katy, he confirmed that the “vast majority” of Farmers’ customers don’t have flood insurance for their homes. He did not know how many were flooded.

“To me, the biggest impact on Houston is going to be the uninsured economic damage here,” Dailey said. “I think this will rival what happened in New Orleans with Katrina.”

Insurance response personnel are helping customers without flood insurance seek assistance from FEMA. Before the agency will provide financial aid, homeowners must have letters from their insurers confirming that the properties didn’t have the proper coverage.

Adjusters are also educating homeowners on the different nonprofits providing aid.

“There’s an outpouring of funding that has happened, the challenge is: How do you find it?” claims officer Daly said. “That will be a frustration for people in Houston as to who’s the lucky one that gets it and who doesn’t. It’s not a regulated environment.”

Early estimates suggest the damages are extensive. Residential insured and uninsured flood loss for Hurricane Harvey could be between \$25 billion and \$37 billion, according to an Aug. 31 report from CoreLogic. About 70 percent of the flood damage is uninsured.

The Insurance Council of Texas estimated \$3.75 billion in insured automobile losses throughout the state. And a JPMorgan report placed overall potential industry insured losses for Harvey at \$20 billion.

ENVIRONMENT

Harvey dumped record-setting 34 trillion gallons of rain

By Dug Begley, Houston Chronicle |
[Express News](#)
September 18, 2017

Give or take a few trillion gallons, Mother Nature dumped the equivalent of Lake Tahoe on Texas and Louisiana, making Hurricane Harvey not just a part of Texas history, but modern storm history.

“This is certainly the most extreme precipitation event on record to affect any major city in the United States,” said Jeff Masters, founder of Weather Underground.

Based on assessments by the National Weather Service and analyses by various meteorologists, Harvey rained down more water on a metro area than any storm in U.S. history. The estimated 34 trillion gallons of rainfall across East Texas and western Louisiana is about the same as Tropical Storm Allison in 2001, 2015’s Memorial Day floods and last year’s Tax Day floods — combined.

“The amount of water that fell was unprecedented,” said Shane Hubbard, an associate researcher at the Space Science and Engineering Center at the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

Based on Hubbard’s analysis and Weather Underground statistics, the storm’s scope was enormous. Among the findings:

The record 51.88-inch recording at Cedar Bayou, east of Houston, is the continental U.S. rainfall record, surpassing a mark set during Tropical Storm Amelia in 1978.

The new national record for a three-day rain total in a metro area is Hobby Airport from Aug. 26-28, with 32.47 inches. Bush Intercontinental is third, over the same days, with 28.44 inches. The National Weather Service’s official rain gauges are at the airports.

The area that received, on average, more than 40 inches of rain is slightly larger than the land mass of Puerto Rico.

The extent of significant rain is something officials are just starting to address, Hubbard said.

“Texas is a big place,” he said. “Sometimes the sheer size gets lost.”

According to his analysis, between Aug. 23 and Aug. 30 an area of nearly 29,000 square miles received 20 inches or more of rain. That is larger than 10 U.S. states.

Hubbard noted the area hit by heavy rains is larger than West Virginia, Delaware and Rhode Island combined.

Using weather monitors, Hubbard mapped where rain was most and least concentrated as storms pounded the area. Though some specific spots received more or less rain, Hubbard's data showed a concentrated 28 inches of rainfall or more from Rosenberg to east of Beaumont.

Central coastal areas where the rains lingered received the most, with many spots receiving 50 inches or more, including a huge swell that deluged Dayton in Liberty County.

HEALTH CONCERNS

Free water testing for well owners in Harvey flood areas

By Todd Ackerman

[Chron](#)

September 18, 2017

The Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service is offering free testing of well-water likely contaminated by Hurricane Harvey floodwaters.

Residents in multiple southeast Texas counties can pick up a free water sampling test kit from their local AgriLife Extension office or other designated location this week, then must return their sample to that location on the designated collection date.

"Residents who have private water wells in areas affected by flooding from Harvey should assume their water is contaminated and have it tested," said Diane Boellstorff, a water resource specialist with AgriLife Extension.

AP Exclusive: Evidence of Spills at Toxic Site During Floods

[US News](#)

September 18, 2017

PASADENA, Texas (AP) — The U.S. government received reports of three spills at one of Houston's dirtiest Superfund toxic waste sites in the days after the drenching rains from Hurricane Harvey finally stopped. Aerial photos reviewed by The Associated Press show dark-colored water surrounding the site as the floods receded, flowing through Vince Bayou and into a ship channel.

The reported spills, which have been not publicly detailed, occurred at U.S. Oil Recovery, a former petroleum industry waste processing plant contaminated with a dangerous brew of cancer-causing chemicals. On Aug. 29, the day Harvey's rains stopped, a county pollution control team sent photos to the

Environmental Protection Agency of three large concrete tanks flooded with water. That led PRP Group, the company overseeing the ongoing cleanup, to call a federal emergency hotline to report a spill affecting nearby Vince Bayou.

Over the next several days, the company reported two more spills of potentially contaminated storm water from U.S. Oil Recovery, according to reports and call logs obtained by the AP from the U.S. Coast Guard, which operates the National Response Center hotline. The EPA requires that spills of oil or hazardous substances in quantities that may be harmful to public health or the environment be immediately reported to the 24-hour hotline when public waterways are threatened.

The EPA has not publicly acknowledged the three spills that PRP Group reported to the Coast Guard. The agency said an on-scene coordinator was at the site last Wednesday and found no evidence that material had washed off the site. The EPA says it is still assessing the scene.

The AP reported in the days after Harvey that at least seven Superfund sites in and around Houston were underwater during the record-shattering storm. Journalists surveyed the sites by boat, vehicle and on foot. U.S. Oil Recovery was not one of the sites visited by AP. EPA said at the time that its personnel had been unable to reach the sites, though they surveyed the locations using aerial photos.

Following AP's report, EPA has been highlighting the federal agency's response to the flooding at Superfund sites. EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt reiterated that safeguarding the intensely-polluted sites is among his top priorities during a visit Friday to the San Jacinto River Waste Pits, one of the sites AP reported about two weeks ago.

Pruitt then boarded a Coast Guard aircraft for an aerial tour of other nearby Superfund sites flooded by Harvey, including U.S. Oil Recovery.

Photos taken Aug. 31 by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration shows dark-colored water surrounding the site two days after the first spill was reported to the government hotline. While the photos do not prove contaminated materials leaked from U.S. Oil Recovery, they do show that as the murky floodwaters receded, they flowed through Vince Bayou and emptied into a ship channel that leads to the San Jacinto River. The hotline caller identified Vince Bayou as the waterway affected by a spill of unknown material in unknown amounts.

Thomas Voltaggio, a retired EPA official who oversaw Superfund cleanups and emergency responses for more than two decades, reviewed the aerial photos, hotline reports and other documents obtained by AP.

"It is intuitively obvious that the rains and floods of the magnitude that occurred during Hurricane Harvey would have resulted in some level of contamination having been released to the environment," said Voltaggio, who is now a private consultant. "Any contamination in those tanks would likely have entered Vince Bayou and potentially the Houston Ship Channel."

He said the amount of contaminants spread from the site during the storm will likely never be known, making the environmental impact difficult to measure. The Houston Ship Channel was already a polluted waterway, with Texas state health officials warning that women of childbearing age and children should not eat fish or crabs caught there because of contamination from dioxins and PCBs.

PRP Group, the corporation formed to oversee the cleanup at U.S. Oil Recovery, said it reported the spills as legally required but said subsequent testing of storm water remaining in the affected tanks showed it met federal drinking water standards. The company declined to provide AP copies of those lab reports or

a list of specific chemicals for which it tested, saying the EPA was expected to release that information soon.

U.S. Oil Recovery was shut down in 2010 after regulators determined operations there posed an environmental threat to Vince Bayou, which flows through the property in Pasadena. Pollution at the former hazardous waste treatment plant is so bad that Texas prosecutors charged the company's owner, Klaus Genssler, with five criminal felonies. The German native fled the United States and is considered a fugitive. Genssler did not respond to efforts to contact him last week through his social media accounts or an email account linked to his website address.

More than 100 companies that sent hazardous materials and oily waste to U.S. Oil Recovery for processing are now paying for the multimillion-dollar cleanup there through a court-monitored settlement, including Baker Hughes Oilfield Operations Inc., U.S. Steel Corp. and Dow Chemical Co.

Past sampling of materials at the site revealed high concentrations of hazardous chemicals linked to cancer, such as benzene, ethylbenzene and trichloroethylene. The site also potentially contains toxic heavy metals, including mercury and arsenic.

A 2012 EPA study of the more than 500 Superfund sites across the United States located in flood zones specifically noted the risk that floodwaters might carry away and spread toxic materials over a wider area.

Over the past six years, remediation efforts at U.S. Oil Recovery have focused on the northern half of the site, including demolishing contaminated structures, removing an estimated 500 tons of sludge and hauling away more than 1,000 abandoned containers of waste.

PRP Group said the southern portion of the site, including the three waste tanks that flooded during Harvey, has not yet been fully cleaned. Over the years workers have removed more than 1.5 million gallons of liquid waste — enough to fill nearly three Olympic-sized swimming pools.

AP began asking the EPA whether contaminated material might have again leaked from U.S. Oil Recovery last week, after reviewing the aerial photos taken Aug. 31. The EPA said it visited the site on Sept. 4, nearly a week after site operators reported an initial spill, and again the following week. The EPA said that its staff saw no evidence that toxins had washed away from the scene during either visit.

"Yesterday, an EPA On-scene coordinator conducted an inspection of Vince Bayou to follow up on a rumor that material was offsite and did not find any evidence of a black oily discharge or material from the U.S. Oil Recovery site," an EPA media release said on Thursday.

PRP Group said the spills occurred at the toxic waste site on Aug. 29, Sept. 6 and Sept. 7. One of the EPA's media releases on Sept. 9, more than 11 days after the first call was made to the hotline, made reference to overflowing water at the scene, but did not describe it as a spill.

The company said it reported the first spill after Harvey's floodwaters swamped the three tanks, filling them. The resulting pressure that built up in the tanks dislodged plugs blocking a series of interconnecting pipes, causing the second and third spills reported to the hotline the following week.

The company does not know how much material leaked from the tanks, soaking into the soil or flowing into nearby Vince Bayou. As part of its post-storm cleanup workers have vacuumed 63 truckloads holding about 315,000 gallons from the tanks.

The Superfund site is located just a few hundred yards from the Pollution Control Services offices for Harris County, which includes Houston. Its director, Bob Allen, says his team took pictures of the flooding on Aug. 29, when the area that includes the three big tanks was still underwater. Allen said his staff did not note any black water or oily sheen on the surface at the time.

"We knew that the water probably got into the plant, probably washed out some of the stuff that was in the clarifier," Allen said, referring to one of the old concrete tanks once used to store toxic waste. Allen's team did not collect samples Aug. 29. He said the EPA later sampled the area to determine whether there was contamination.

"Once they get done with the assessment of that site and the other Superfund Harris County sites, then they'll probably let us know, let the public know, what's been going on," Allen said.

FLOOD INSURANCE

Insurance Council of Texas Says

By Andrea Rumbaugh
[Houston Chronicle](#)
September 15, 2017

Hurricane Harvey caused \$19 billion in insured losses, topping Hurricane Ike, until now the costliest storm to hit Texas with \$12 billion in insured losses, the Insurance Council of Texas said Friday.

Insured windstorm and other storm-related property losses are expected to top \$3 billion. This doesn't include residential property losses due to flooding or any uninsured losses.

The flooding of some 250,000 private passenger and commercial vehicles is expected to result in \$4.75 billion in losses.

On top of those, Federal Emergency Management Agency administrator Roy Wright previously said he expects the National Flood Insurance Program to make \$11 billion in payments to homeowners who carried flood insurance. Those flood losses would be the second highest on record after Hurricane Katrina.

Many more homeowners did not have flood insurance.

"The number of uninsured homeowners who felt the full wrath of Harvey is staggering," Mark Hanna, spokesman for the Insurance Council of Texas, said in the news release. "Undoubtedly, the full economic impact from Harvey on Texas will not be known for some time."

Study Finds FEMA Flood Maps Missed 75% of Houston Flood Damage Claims between 1999 And 2009

By Trevor Nace
[Forbes](#)
September 18, 2017

A recent study found that FEMA failed to capture 75 percent of flood damages within their flood maps between 1999 and 2009. The FEMA flood maps are the primary source for how the government and insurance companies evaluate flood risk and insurance premiums. There are collectively trillions of dollars' worth of property that rely on these maps being accurate.

The study, conducted by Rice University and Texas A&M University in Galveston, analyzed flood claims between the years of 1999 and 2009 during which there were five major floods. Each of these five floods did not meet the 100-year flood criteria and thus the FEMA flood maps which are based on 100-year floods should have been sufficient to cover Houston residents.

Unfortunately, 75 percent of flood damages caused by these five floods were not within FEMA's 100-year flood maps. The study was published just days before Harvey struck Houston causing devastating flooding throughout the city and many other cities across coastal Texas and Louisiana.

What went wrong? Why were the maps significantly different from reality in these five storms?

The study analyzed Hurricane Ike in 2008, Tropical Storms Erin and Allison in 2007 and 2001, respectively, and two unnamed rainstorms that resulted in flooding in 2006 and 2009. They compared these rain events to what hydrologists call a 100-year flood, meaning that a flood of that magnitude has a 1 percent or 1 in 100 chance of occurring. All five of the aforementioned flooding events did not meet the 100-year flood threshold.

Generally, FEMA models flood events by determining the amount of water required to flood rivers and streams and once flooded where that water will eventually go. However, this type of modeling can be limiting in low-lying areas such as Houston. First, imagine a town at the base of a broad mountain. If there was heavy rain on the mountain, FEMA's models would do a good job at predicting the amount of water that is likely to flow down the mountain and flood rivers and streams within the mountain town. That is, of course, if there is no significant avulsion of the rivers (where rivers abandon their current path for a new path during flood events).

In the second scenario picture heavy rainfall in a low-lying city with waterways throughout the city. In this scenario, the FEMA model doesn't do a great job at predicting where the water will go as the models are primarily used for overflow of rivers and streams. Flooding in low-lying areas can cause water to flow in practically any direction and is not dependent on the overflow of waterways.

A second limitation of FEMA's flood models is the granularity within the model compared to a complex landscape such as Houston. The models will typically classify whole neighborhoods or groups of neighborhoods with the same land use (green space, forest, concrete parking lot, etc.) and soil type (sand, silt, clay, etc.). This means the model is limited in predicting localized flood events within a specific neighborhood.

These two important limitations of FEMA's models make creating a 100-year flood map a difficult task. This is not to say the men and women of FEMA aren't experts at what they do and invaluable in their work. However, the task of modeling flood zones within a city like Houston requires a more complex, detailed, and innovative computational model. These models exist and it's time to start employing them in difficult to model areas like Houston.

As with many catastrophic disasters, we come out of them realizing the limitations of our tools and systems of protection. It's a similar lesson to the levee breaches from Hurricane Katrina in 2005, and a call for better and more robust protection against the inevitable next natural disaster.

Congress Can Fix Flood Insurance This Year

By U.S. Representative Sean Duffy

[Bloomberg](#)

September 18, 2017

It would be hard to find a more unlikely pair of congressmen than the two of us to find agreement on a highly controversial issue. After working on the complicated issue of flood insurance, however, we've concluded that the way the federal government handles disasters is itself a disaster.

Drastic reform of the National Flood Insurance Program is long overdue. The program now subsidizes insurance for millionaires, puts low-income families in harm's way, and keeps people trapped in vulnerable homes by masking the true risk of flooding. The president and Congress have just extended the program for three months, creating a perfect opportunity for Congress to enact bipartisan reforms.

The NFIP was established nearly 50 years ago for good reason: The private sector had no appetite or capacity to undertake the tremendous and unpredictable risk of flooding. But over the years, the program has been seriously mismanaged. And today, technology has made it easier to manage and predict risks. So it's worth exploring ways to give private insurance companies the incentive to share the financial costs of flood insurance.

Congress has been reluctant to come to the hard decisions needed to make its system actuarially sound. Flood maps that are supposed to assign risk to properties are hopelessly out of date. Many people living in flood-prone neighborhoods continue to receive significant subsidies for their insurance premiums. (Let's not forget that many of these properties are million-dollar homes with gorgeous views of water, which should make the possibility of flooding clear.) We've taken few steps to lower the risk of flood damage. And we've failed to send the right signals to state and local governments to establish sound policies of their own. Essentially, we're hemorrhaging money only to keep people at risk.

Congress will not change this system overnight, but it can start moving in the right direction.

We must deal with the program's debt — now more than \$24 billion — and put it back on a fiscally responsible path. Catastrophic storms aren't entirely to blame for this debt. Highly subsidized premiums do not send the right pricing signals. Annual premiums add up to about \$3.5 billion a year, but program costs run to \$5 billion — even before accounting for catastrophic losses like those from Hurricanes Harvey and Irma. The debt cannot be repaid with premiums alone.

A top priority should be to update all flood maps. It's no use pretending that the facts on the ground haven't changed. With accurate information, property owners and property buyers can better know what risks they face — and local and state governments can better address flooding.

Full actuarial rates for flood insurance premiums should be phased in. We must stop giving subsidies to some property owners and sending misleading signals to all of them. We need to be sensitive to problems this will create for some owners, especially those with low and moderate incomes. But the NFIP's subsidized rates make flood-prone properties more affordable, and we should subsidize only owners who are truly in need.

For the sake of people's health and safety, it's critical that we also stop paying to repeatedly rebuild flood-prone properties. Thousands of Americans are being paid as much as or more than their insured properties are worth. This threatens the solvency of the flood insurance program, and also keeps people living in dangerous situations with little incentive to better protect their homes or move. Strong flood-proofing standards are needed to see that repeatedly flooded properties are reinforced or elevated. In many cases, flooded homes should be relocated, allowing floodplains to return to their natural state.

Where possible, we have to mitigate flood risk. We save about \$4 for every \$1 spent on mitigation and disaster preparedness. More important, mitigation saves the lives of those who live in harm's way, and those whose job it is to rescue them.

Over the next three months, Congress has a unique opportunity to reform NFIP on a bipartisan, non-ideological basis. Our first job is to help the victims of Hurricanes Harvey and Irma, but we must also work to protect potential victims of future floods. Let's all go up to 40,000 feet, look down at the flooding and devastation from Harvey and Irma (and Katrina and Sandy), and act on recommendations that have been on the table for decades. Let's fix the program this time and protect our families.

What Is the National Flood Insurance Program?

By Erin Dooley and Jeffrey Cook

[ABC News](#)

September 18, 2017

In the wake of Hurricanes Harvey and Irma, the nation grieved as images of emerged of homes submerged up to the eaves, abandoned pets perched on debris and household belongings molding on street curbs.

In the days that followed, tens of thousands appealed to the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) for money to rebuild – but the majority of Harvey's worst-hit families discovered that although they qualified for small assistance payments, they lacked the type of insurance coverage that would allow them to recoup what they'd lost in the floods.

As Texas and Florida struggle to navigate through a web of government agencies and charity organizations, we asked: What is FEMA flood insurance, who gets it, and why – and who's really footing the bill?

A Little History

Championed by President Lyndon B. Johnson, the National Flood Insurance Program, or NFIP, was created by the National Flood Insurance Act of 1968, after disillusioned private insurers abandoned the market when they realized flood insurance wasn't profitable.

According to Congressional analysts, NFIP policies “transfer some of the financial risk of property owners to the federal government” and, in return, requires flood-prone communities adhere to certain building codes and implement flood mitigation strategies.

Who's eligible for coverage?

Only those living in one of the nation's 22,000 "NFIP-participating communities" – neighborhoods at risk of significant flooding that have adopted flood mitigation strategies – can purchase NFIP policies from the government through their insurance agent.

Some property owners, especially those in high-risk areas, may be required to buy flood insurance, while others, usually those in moderate-risk locales, may be offered an optional policy. Premium rates, some of which are partially subsidized by the federal government, are based on the area's degree of risk and the property construction and elevation.

Who Pays, and How Much?

Though NFIP collects about \$3.5 billion in premiums annually, the program is nearly \$25 billion in debt, according to reports from the Government Accountability Office and Congressional Research Service. It accrued the bulk of this debt in the wake of the 2005 hurricane season, following Hurricanes Katrina, Rita, and Wilma, and after Superstorm Sandy in 2012, both agencies note.

"Whether or not FEMA will ultimately be able to pay off the debt is largely dependent on future insurance claims, namely if catastrophic flooding incidents such as Hurricanes Sandy or Katrina occur again and with what frequency," congressional analysts wrote in a report released in July – just one month before Harvey made landfall.

Its solvency in question, the program has endured criticism from groups like the National Resources Defense Council, which claim the NFIP has wasted money repeatedly rebuilding vulnerable homes when it would have been cheaper to help homeowners move to higher ground. It's also drawn flack over its policy of "grandfathering," or allowing property owners to pay premiums based on outdated flood maps. The good news, financially speaking is that according to FEMA, the building codes and flood mitigation strategies implemented because of the program save the nation \$1.87 billion each year.

Who's in charge?

NFIP is run by FEMA, but must be reauthorized by Congress every five years.

Along with a host of other federal government programs, the current authorization, passed in 2012, was set to expire at the end of September. But H.R. 601, the continuing resolution passed last week, extended that authorization through December 8.

After that date, key authorities of the NFIP – such as the authority to issue new contracts, and the ability to borrow large sums from the U.S. Treasury – will lapse, and it will be up to lawmakers to ensure the program's future.

What it's not

Many flood victims confuse FEMA flood insurance payments and FEMA assistance.

Unlike flood insurance, FEMA assistance doesn't require recipients to purchase a policy before catastrophe strikes – it's simply handed out to disaster victims to cover critical expenses like food and temporary lodging. However, assistance isn't meant to restore properties to their pre-disaster state. FEMA assistance payments are capped at just over \$33,000 maximum per household – and the actual payout is generally much lower than that.

“FEMA assistance is really only designed to be a life-vest, it’s not designed to be an insurance policy,” a former FEMA official told ABC News.

For example, assistance payments won’t pay to replace your house – or, in some cases, even refinish damaged drywall in unused bedrooms.

FEMA flood insurance, by contrast, is designed to make victims whole, financially – and because it’s partially funded by premiums, the payouts are much, much higher. Following Hurricane Katrina, for example, the average assistance payment was around \$6,300, according to FEMA. The average NFIP payment? More than \$97,000.

Many people in flood-prone areas go without insurance

By Washington Examiner Staff
[Washington Examiner](#)
September 18, 2017

Lloyd Dixon and Noreen Clancy for the RAND Corporation: Even though the full extent of Hurricane Harvey's devastating impact is still becoming apparent, one thing is for certain: Thousands of Houston-area homeowners will face massive, uninsured losses due to flood damage. It is likely that only 25 to 45 percent of the flooded one- to four-family homes had flood coverage, though precise figures for Houston are not yet available...

There are multiple reasons why homeowners do not buy flood insurance voluntarily. Research has shown that people tend to ignore low-probability risks. People may also expect government assistance. And, some people think that they have flood insurance when they do not. Our recent work in New York City found that 16 percent of homeowners who thought they had flood insurance actually did not — and that is in an area that recently experienced massive flooding. Finally, some households may find it difficult to afford flood insurance. We found that flood insurance is financially burdensome for a quarter of homeowners in the high-risk flood zones in New York City. ...

With this in mind, what can be done if policymakers want to increase the number of households with flood insurance? We would argue that in that case, the most effective strategy would be to extend the mandatory purchase requirement, perhaps expanding the requirement to all homes in the high-risk flood zones, regardless of mortgage. Policymakers also could consider extending the mandatory purchase requirement to the 500-year flood zone, perhaps with lower requirement on the amount of coverage that needs to be purchased. We've seen catastrophic flooding outside the high-risk flood zones in Houston again and again, a problem that likely will only increase in coastal areas as sea levels rise, land subsides in coastal Louisiana and Texas, and development weakens natural protections against flooding.

Rural America looks for upward mobility

Fred Dews for the Brookings Institution: There are some clear differences between high-mobility [rural] counties and those that might be considered "mobility traps" in terms of education, work experience, family stability and out-migration. Rural counties in the Southeast tend to have much lower upward mobility scores than those in the Great Plains, which generally perform quite well. These regional differences might be explained by disparities in things such as investments in primary education and patterns of family structure we witness at the county level.

The counties that exhibit the highest rates of upward mobility share many features. In particular, K-12 educational quality and family structure are strongly associated with upward mobility in rural areas, even more so than across all counties.

Though many of these metrics are merely descriptive, their relationship is compelling and reveals how some counties are successfully preparing young residents for success in adulthood.

Don't punch tickets for re-regulation, President Trump

Ian Adams for the R Street Institute: Congress was able to achieve ... substantial railroad deregulation with the Staggers Rail Act of 1980, which eliminated costly rate controls and regulatory review processes that needlessly drove prices upward.

The law was an important step to ensure that privately operated railroads could sustain themselves in a competitive manner. In fact, in the decade following the law's passage, the rail industry was able to cut its costs and prices by half. By some estimates, shipping rates have dropped 51 percent since reforms went into effect.

But that could change. Shipping interests who are reliant on moving their goods by rail are seeking a rule that would force railroads to lend their tracks to other railroads. This so-called "reciprocal switching" rule is based on a pair of faulty assumptions.

The first incorrect assumption is that rail lines are public property and should be treated the same as roads. They aren't, and they shouldn't be. For the most part, rail lines are owned by private companies. The second bad assumption is that railroads can't coordinate use of each other's rail lines on their own, even though they do it all the time.

President Trump hasn't made public his choices for the two Surface Transportation Board seats that are set to be filled. It is vital that new members of the board, whoever they may be, understand that a reciprocal switching rule would effectively re-regulate our nation's rails. It is up to the Senate to ensure the nominees understand not only the details of the Staggers Act, but also its intent: to keep U.S. rails free and competitive.

GOVERNMENT/ POLITICS

The Politics of Harvey Relief: How Local, State Officials Are Performing So Far

By Jeremy Wallace
[Houston Chronicle](#)
September 17, 2017

Three weeks after Hurricane Harvey rumbled onto Texas' shores, the real world damage has become clear with horrific flooding, thousands forced from their homes, more than 80 deaths and years of recovery left to come all lie ahead.

But there is a political impact to the storm too, that is only now beginning to come into focus. Political leaders can't prevent natural disasters. But how they respond can have a big impact on their political careers that could reverberate for years.

In most cases, presidents, governors and mayors benefit from attention, said Kyle Kondik, communications director for the University of Virginia Center for Politics. “Disasters can often bring out the best in people and become a unifying event,” Kondik said.

But the optics of mishandling one can be disastrous.

After Hurricane Katrina hit Louisiana, the finger pointing between state, city and national leaders was hard to escape, and many are convinced it only added to President George W. Bush’s declining popularity at the time. Bush had his reasons, but viewed New Orleans from high above in Air Force One and continually praised the director of the Federal Emergency Management Agency at a time when the agency too many Americans appeared to be struggling to stay in control of the crisis.

But manage a storm well, as Gov. Chris Christie was credited with after Hurricane Sandy in 2012 in New Jersey, and approval rating can shoot through the roof. Christie, a Republican, saw his approval ratings jump from around 56 percent to as high as 77 percent in the days after the storm blasted New Jersey’s coastal communities. Instead of what was expected to be a tough re-election, Christie would cruise to victory with ads reminding voters of how he responded to the storm and worked with then-President Barack Obama to ensure relief flowed to the state.

Already, political experts say key leaders in Texas have avoided obvious major mistakes that could have charged up opposition and made 2018 a very different time.

“Harvey has probably done as much as anything to save Republicans from tougher races,” said Brandon Rottinghaus, a political analyst who teaches at the University of Houston.

All of Texas’ elected statewide officials, outside those in the judiciary, are Republican and plan to run for reelection in 2018.

With Gov. Greg Abbott avoiding major missteps handling Hurricane Harvey, he’s likely to see a bump in approval ratings of about 2 percent in counties pummeled by the storm, said Rottinghaus. Statewide, he said, the governor is likely to see a roughly 4 percent boost, which will help other Republicans on the ticket stave off Democratic attempts.

Here’s a look at how key leaders responded to the disaster.

Mayor Sylvester Turner and Harris County Judge Ed Emmett

Highlights: Despite criticism from people largely outside of Houston for Turner and Emmett to issue an evacuation, neither ever did. With memories of Hurricane Rita and the deaths that occurred as Houstonians tried to flee fresh in people’s minds, Turner made clear that evacuating the state’s largest city was unwise. “You literally cannot put 6.5 million people on the road,” he said. “The decision that we made was a smart one. It was in the best interest of Houstonians,” he later added. With the region in full recovery mode, Emmett called for a sweeping re-examination of the region’s flood control strategy even though what he outlined could cost billions of dollars. Emmett’s proposal includes looking at large-scale buyouts, banding with surrounding counties to create a regional flood control district and seeking authority from the state to levy a sales tax to pay for what likely would be a massive initiative.

Questionable: In the middle of a natural disaster top leaders are typically in frequent communication to assure resources are flowing. But in Turner’s case he went days without returning a phone call from Gov. Greg Abbott. On the Friday before the storm hit, Abbott said he left four messages on Turner’s personal cell phone but had not heard back. It took days for Turner to return the call.

Also, Turner made abundantly clear that the handling of the Addicks and Barker Reservoir releases was mostly out of his control and a decision the Army Corps of Engineers made to prevent a more catastrophic dam break in case of another big rain. But on Sept. 1, realizing flooding in west Houston would continue, Turner initially called for a voluntary evacuation of the area to relieve stress on first responders who were having to keep tabs on people in the inundated homes. But a day later, Turner changed course and ordered the evacuation mandatory for about 300 people in West Houston.

Gov. Greg Abbott

Highlights: Gov. Greg Abbott made clear this was not going to be Louisiana during Hurricane Katrina. In every press conference, on social media and in press releases Abbott continually stressed how much he was talking directly with President Donald Trump and federal officials to respond to the disaster. And Abbott was quick to join Trump and Vice President Mike Pence during separate visits into Texas to survey damage. By the time the storm hit, Abbott had mobilized the entire state and National Guard and had state government officials deployed throughout the affected counties.

Questionable: Without consulting either Harris County Judge Ed Emmett or Houston Mayor Sylvester Turner, Abbott on Friday before the storm hit seemed to call for Houstonians to evacuate. But Emmett and Turner clearly didn't think that was the best course of action. "If we wanted to call an evacuation, we wouldn't even know where to call it," Emmett said, fearing sending people into areas that ultimately could have been hit as the storm shifted unpredictably. To be fair, Abbott could have tried to drive a wedge between him and Turner but resisted even when national talk show hosts like Sean Hannity tried to open the door for him to slam Turner. "We are working collaboratively," Abbott responded.

Also, on Sept 1, Abbott declared without hesitation that there was no gas shortage in Texas. "There's plenty of fuel, plenty of gasoline in the United States of America and there's plenty of gasoline in the state of Texas," Abbott said at a briefing. Yet his comments came as many gas stations in Texas were without gas. In San Antonio on that same day, more than 70 percent of stations were out of gas.

President Donald Trump

Highlights: President Donald Trump was on the ground in Corpus Christi just four days after Harvey hit 30 miles to the east. While he took some criticism from the left for not going directly to hard hit Rockport, Trump went through briefings with state and federal officials and spoke with first responders one-on-one. Days later he was in Houston meeting with children forced from their homes and working with volunteers to hand out supplies. Sure he didn't have a tearful hug like Presidents George W. Bush and Barack Obama, who were more comfortable giving out in public, but Trump assured he wouldn't face criticism on not visiting fast enough.

Questionable: While the visits were at a difficult time in the state, Trump often struck a peculiar tone. In Corpus Christi, for instance, Trump at times shifted into campaign mode. "What a crowd, what a turnout," Trump said to supporters outside a fire station where emergency crews were briefing him on the destruction Harvey caused in the region. Then in Houston days later, after one volunteer told Trump he voted for him, Trump couldn't resist boasting about his 2016 victory even as people displaced from their home stood in line a few feet away waiting for a hot meal.

FEMA Director Brock Long

Highlights: He was present. From the moment the storms hit, Long – who has been in his job just since June – was on the ground in Texas, avoiding any potential criticism that he was out of touch with what

was happening on the ground. Long was in Corpus Christi even before Air Force One landed as President Trump began to assess the situation.

Questionable: Seemingly unprovoked, Long himself brought on comparisons to Hurricane Katrina, specifically declaring FEMA was going to keep the George R. Brown Convention Center conditions from getting out of control. More than 10,000 people sought shelter in the center, but Long insisted there would be no shortage of supplies.

“This is not the Superdome,” Long said referring to where residents of New Orleans endured deadly conditions after Katrina 12 years ago. “The people at the convention center have food and security,” Mr. Long said, adding, “All eyes are on Houston, and so are mine.”

Congressional delegation

Highlights: It was fast. When Harvey first hit, the storm hadn’t even made it to Houston before members of Congress from New York and New Jersey were reminding the nation that Sens. Ted Cruz and John Cornyn, both Republicans, voted against emergency funding to help that part of the nation recover from Super Storm Sandy in 2015. Yet, no retribution came, within days of reconvening after Labor Day, both the House and the Senate approved a \$15 billion in disaster aid to help Texas and Louisiana.

Questionable: At a time most are celebrating the bipartisanship of Democrats and Republicans, four Republicans in the Texas delegation joined with 86 other Republicans in voting against the aid package because it included a stop-gap government funding measure and a debt ceiling increase. While many Republicans objected to the funding being in the aid package, most went along because of the dire need for federal aid. But Rep. Joe Barton of Arlington, Rep. Jeb Hensarling of Dallas, Rep. Sam Johnson of Plano and Rep. Mac Thornberry of Clarendon all voted against funding.

Rockport officials

Highlights: The words from Rockport Mayor Pro Tem Patrick Rios beamed nationwide in minutes. As Harvey made a beeline for Rockport he was clear: “We’re suggesting if people are going to stay here, mark their arm with a Sharpie pen with their name and Social Security number,” Rios said of a measure to help identify them should they be killed. Over the top? Maybe. But the result was that the majority of Rockports residents fled. Much of the city of 10,000 people was flattened, but so far just two deaths have been reported.

Questionable: Residents who could not flee the city reported having trouble getting information on where to find shelters and those who found them found them poorly organized.

BUSINESS & ECONOMY

Businesses far from the devastation can feel storm's impact

By Joyce M. Rosenberg
[HoustonChronicle](#)
September 17, 2017

NEW YORK - Texas and Florida are usually the biggest markets for ReelSonar's fishing devices and apps. But recreation isn't a priority right now - and may not be for a while - in the states amid the devastation left by hurricanes Harvey and Irma.

Though ReelSonar is based in Seattle, thousands of miles from the damage, it's feeling an impact from the storms. It's the same for many small businesses with lots of customers or suppliers in disaster areas. Sales drop off as people and businesses prepared for the hurricanes and are likely to stay down as everyone assesses and deals with the damage.

"When you're trying to put your life back together, fishing becomes secondary," says ReelSonar owner Alex Lebedev.

He doesn't know yet how much his revenue will be hurt, but he had an inkling from Amazon.com, where sales are down 70 percent from a year ago. His products are also sold in hundreds of sporting goods and camping stores in Texas and Florida. One saving grace is that the fishing season isn't at its peak, and Lebedev is hoping to make back his lost sales during the holiday shopping season.

Suppliers take hit

Companies that suffer losses because of a far-off disaster aren't eligible for federal disaster aid the way businesses nearby might be. And most small businesses are unlikely to have the expensive and specific kind of business insurance that would cover them in such cases.

Many small businesses whose suppliers have been hurt by the storms are in limbo while they wait to hear how long it will take vendors to be able to send out merchandise or parts. Some companies may have to find alternative vendors.

The Critter Depot, based in Lancaster, Pa. sells live creatures like crickets and worms to feed reptile pets and has as a main supplier a farm in Okeechobee, Fla. The farm shut down operations as Irma approached and suffered extensive damage.

Critter Depot owner Jeff Neal has had to tell some customers that they couldn't get their shipments. Reptile owners tend to buy 1,000 critters at a time, and feed their pets about 20 crickets a day, supplementing their diet with worms.

"They still have to feed their pets, so they're going to look elsewhere," Neal says.

Though he knew before the storm he'd lose some sales, he's offering customers a 50 percent discount to encourage them not to abandon his company permanently. And even though other suppliers don't give him as good a deal, he's turning to backup sources until his Florida vendor is up and running again. He expects the storm to cost him as much as \$6,000.

Harvey and Irma have sent sales at Promos On-Time down as much as 40 percent since Labor Day, compared to 2016 business. The company, which sells pens, mugs, baseball hats and other giveaways and knickknacks, has lost orders as customers along the Gulf Coast and in Florida canceled events.

"Texas and Florida combined probably account for 10 to 15 percent of our revenue," says Michael Lerner, owner of the Mineola, N.Y.-based company.

The business Promos On-Time has lost is gone forever - organizers of many back-to-school and charity events planned for this month in the two states are unlikely to reschedule and place orders, Lerner says.

On top of that, his biggest suppliers are located in Florida and haven't been able to fill orders. Lerner has been looking in the Northeast and the West Coast for substitutes.

Satellite offices impacted

Small businesses with satellite operations in a disaster area can also suffer losses. Peter Yang estimates that his New York-based ResumeGo, which provides career coaching and resume writing services, has lost \$10,000 because its Houston office was shut down by Harvey. The ResumeGo office, which employs nine of his 50 staffers, is on the 21st floor of a building that had severe flooding to its lower floors.

Yang's employees in New York, Boston and Chicago had to fill in for Houston colleagues who couldn't work. "A large fraction of our staff worked throughout Labor Day weekend so that we can continue providing our services without interruption," Yang says.

He paid them overtime to compensate for losing their holiday weekend.

The towel company Erin Robertson started in Los Angeles this year gets its fabric from Florida, but shipments are on hold. That's slowing her production and ability to send Ta-Ta Towels to customers. She's had some cancellations but also had some displaced customers in Texas and Florida ask to have their orders held or sent to different addresses.

Robertson has had to sort through the packages, trying to see if she can catch an order before it goes out. "I totally understand, but from a small business perspective, it's a lot of work," she says.

Still, she's aware that events like natural disasters can affect an entrepreneur.

"I feel like I'm facing what every small business faces - every day brings new challenges and you've got to figure them out," she says.

HUMAN INTEREST & COMMUNITY OUTREACH

Central Georgians bake cookies for Harvey victims

By Katelyn Heck, WMAZ

[WMAZ](#)

September 18, 2017

When Dawn Morgan heard about all of the families displaced in Texas from Hurricane Harvey, she knew she wanted to help.

"I thought we could make some cookies from Houston County to Houston, Texas," she says. Morgan is an avid baker and thought sharing her talents would be a sweet gesture that could make a big impact.

"Cookies are something that can put a quick smile on a face, make them forget, even just for a moment, that they have issues," Morgan said.

So she reached out to other bakers on social media and soon pledges of cookie donations started flooding in.

“So far we have about 18 bakers in the community and surrounding communities that are going to be making cookies. I’m estimating about 1,000 cookies,” Morgan said.

For those who can’t bake, Morgan says they can help bag up the cookies or donate supplies. She says anyone who does want to bake can pick up a free Texas-shaped cookie cutter to use.

Morgan will be giving all of the cookies to a friend traveling to Houston on a mission trip at the end of September.

“They’re going to know that people out there really do care about them and there are better times ahead,” she says.

Franklin's Backyard BBQ raises funds for Harvey relief

By Esmi Careaga

[FOX7-Austin](#)

September 18, 2017

As if Texans didn't have enough on their plates, last month FOX 7 News was first on scene when the iconic Franklin Barbecue caught fire.

The BBQ joint closed its doors temporarily because of the structural damage to the property.

However, Pitmaster Aaron Franklin isn't letting that stop him from stepping up and helping fellow Texans.

He hosted the "Franklin's Backyard Barbecue" fundraiser for Hurricane Harvey relief efforts, at the Red River music venue the Mohawk. "It seemed like a no brainer I mean a bunch of terrible stuff happened with Harvey and a lot of people need some help. Just doing what we can do," said Franklin.

The benefit gave some the opportunity to taste the world famous barbecue for the first time while giving back.

"It's just sublime it's the most tender BBQ brisket I have ever had in my life," said Terri Bucar. "The people devastated by Harvey and I think it's important to come together as a community and do what we can to help fellow Texans who are in need."

Locals know the wait time at Franklin's can tick into the hours, but when it comes to the lines at Sunday's fundraiser; customers said the wait was well worth it. "We want them to wrap around the building 5 to 10 times. I hope people keep coming," said Bucar.

A group of Australians who were on a road trip planned to stop by Houston but their plans changed after the hurricane hit. "We were going to Houston but now that it all happened we changed our plans," said James Rousset.

He said social media informed them that Franklin was going to be hosting Hurricane Harvey relief efforts.

Rousset said the food tastes even better when it's for a good cause.

"We got to many meat sweats. But glad we can put our part in to make a little change," said Roussett.

As the famed pitmaster works to get his own business back up and running, he is making light out of a bad situation. "Wasn't the greatest of fire, it was over cooked," said Franklin.

Franklin said 100% of the proceeds raised Sunday will go directly to the Global Giving's Hurricane Harvey Relief Fund. They will also host another event next Sunday at 11 a.m.

Tickets are \$30 at the door and first come first serve.

As for when Franklin Barbecue could reopen its doors, Franklin is hoping to be running again in November.

Red Cross working to move Harvey evacuees from GRB

[ABC13](#)

September 18, 2017

HOUSTON, Texas (KTRK) -- As another week passes in the wake of Hurricane Harvey, some of the people who were driven from their homes by the storm are being moved from the large George R. Brown Convention Center to other shelters.

Over the weekend, the American Red Cross said they relocated 250 people to the Chinese Community Center on Town Park Drive even though the shelter expected to take in only 200. The extra people were moved or were in the process of moving to other shelters, including the Houston Community College warehouse on Fannin.

Spencer Pollock, a spokesman for the American Red Cross, said the nonprofit organization is doing its best to keep people safe and comfortable and get them on the road to recovery.

The Red Cross could not give a timeline of how long the evacuees will be at the Chinese Community Center.

Brian Davis and his family members are some of the evacuees at the Chinese Community Center. In a set of unfortunate situations, Davis said he evacuated with his family from Missouri City and relocated to Sienna Plantation, where it was struck by a tornado.

Weathering the twister, Davis said his family then were told to evacuate once more when the nearby Addicks and Barker reservoirs opened.

"My family is all over, but it's going to be alright," Davis said.

Davis stayed at the George R. Brown for two weeks.

Describing his new shelter, Davis said its gym had almost 300 people and box fans were set up with no room for beds.

Given the situation, Davis said Red Cross volunteers have been amazing.

Austin Fun Club Helps New Mom Who Lost Everything In Hurricane Harvey

[Business Insider](#)

September 17, 2017

HOUSTON, Sept. 17, 2017 /PRNewswire/ -- Like many people affected by Hurricane Harvey, Ashley Sullivan and her family lost everything. Unlike most others, however, Ashley was nine months pregnant. While cleaning out their home and trying to salvage anything they could on Sept. 2, Ashley's family noticed she was swelling. Her blood pressure was dangerously high, and she was rushed to Houston Northwest Medical Center for evaluation, where she delivered her baby boy, Layne, by C-section the following day.

At the same time, Carrie Woydziak, founder of the Austin Fun Club, was looking for a family in need for her next philanthropic project. Ashley's plight – a newborn baby, no home, no supplies – was brought to her attention by a nurse at the hospital. Carrie rallied her fellow club members to raise \$3,000 to help Ashley as she starts to rebuild her life as a new mom. The entire story can be found on Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/donate/1427237980691242/>. Today, Carrie met Ashley and presented her with the check from the Austin Fun Club.

Local bands host Harvey benefit concert

By Amber Treybig

[KBTX](#)

September 17, 2017

BRYAN, Tex. (KBTX)- Band members from all over the Brazos Valley came together to put on a show and raise money for a Hurricane Harvey relief fund.

The show started at 8 p.m. at the Grand Stafford Theater located in Bryan.

The cover was \$5 and all funds went towards the Greater Houston Community Foundation under a Hurricane Harvey Relief Fund established by and Mayor Turner & County Judge Emmett of Houston.

"You know, all of the band members are from the Houston area, and we have some bands from Houston that play here, plus, we go down and play there, so it felt normal to do this and raise money," said Josh Willis a local musician.

Although he was not able to head down and help out those in need, Willis says it is nice to help out any way they can.

"It's rewarding, it feels good to know that even though I can't go down the street every day and rip drywall out of someone's house or rip out carpets, I can still do my part here, 90 miles away, and try to make a difference," added Willis.

Bands that played included the Ex-Optimists, Mutant Love, Electric Astronaut, and Luca.

Campbell County man meets and helps Texas family devastated by Hurricane Harvey

By Courtney Jodon

[ABC13](#)

September 17, 2017

A Campbell County man has been traveling to and from Houston, Texas before and after Hurricane Harvey hit.

Jamie Trent works for Knapheide Manufacturing and travels a lot for his job. He has been in Texas twice in the last three weeks for his job.

He left Houston the day before Hurricane Harvey hit and was just there again last week. That's where he met client, customer and now newfound friend, Steve Altus and his family.

"I just went down for a typical meeting, but I spent about two hours just speaking about his experiences," Trent said about his talks with Altus.

Altus and his family live in Spring, Texas which was one of the hardest hit areas by Hurricane Harvey.

"The water crested in their house at about 7 and a 1/2 feet," Trent said.

Trent said the Altus family tried to escape their home by boat, but "The current was too rough and the bilge pump stopped working in the boat and they were taking on water so the people that were rescuing them had to turn them around, take them back to their house and just make them stay upstairs to ride out the storm, but everything was lost down below."

The Altus family didn't have flood insurance, which means the cost of the damage would be out of their pocket.

"From what he was telling me he was in an area where it was like a 100-year flood zone," Trent said. "Insurance wasn't required so a lot of these people that lived in this area of Spring, Texas didn't have flood insurance."

Trent has kept in touch with Altus and talks to him every other day now.

"I was devastated by what he was telling me," Trent said. "At one point I caught him telling me, 'Jamie everything's going to be OK' and I stopped him in mid-sentence and I said 'shouldn't I be telling you that?' and he said no, we're gonna be OK here, we're Texans."

Altus' kids go to a private catholic school and the administrators there paid for them to attend school for the next two years... free of charge. Trent said nuns from their church also helped tear down all the flood damaged drywall in their home.

"Just general contractors dropped off I don't know maybe \$10,000 worth of plywood and dry walling and stuff like that," Trent said. "I guess the donation dollars that everyone asks for, it is helping. I saw firsthand what it's going towards."

Many of these donations from people across the country and even in central Virginia.

"It's amazing, not just me, but as a whole, what I've seen firsthand, everybody coming together," Trent said.

We were unable to get in contact with Steve Altus for this story.

You can send donations to several organizations to help with their efforts in Texas, Florida and all of the other states affected by hurricanes Harvey and Irma. |

Family mourns mom who died carrying toddler through Harvey floodwaters

By Mike Hixenbaugh

[HoustonChronicle](#)

September 18, 2017

BEAUMONT — A 3-year-old girl with a pink backpack, found clinging to her mother's floating body. The haunting scene made headlines across the country three weeks ago as Hurricane Harvey battered Southeast Texas.

By Saturday, the floodwaters had long since subsided. Most of the national news crews had left town. And, finally, Collette Sulcer's family found time to grieve.

"There has been so much focus on how she died," pastor Delbert A. Mack Sr. said as mourners filtered into Cathedral of Faith Baptist Church. "I want to encourage you to focus on how she lived."

How she lived.

Medrick Lee's mind flashed to 1979. He was 29 and living with his aunt and young cousin. Three-year-old Collette, an only child, was like a kid sister. A daughter, almost.

She called him "Bo."

Bo remembered how she'd loved to tag along with him back then. How she'd insisted on sitting in the front seat of his car, sandwiched between him and his girlfriend. How the toddler had shouted, "Eat her up, Bo," when she'd seen them kissing. How the tiny girl had punched him, another time, when he'd told her she had to stay home.

"The hardest I've ever been hit in my life," Bo said during the funeral, a smile spreading across his tear-stained face, "was when I got punched by a 3-year-old girl. That was my cousin Collette."

She got older. And kinder. She was 20 when her mother — her best friend, she'd always said — died of a freak asthma attack. She changed her college major after that, Bo said, and decided to become a nurse. A nurse might have been able to help her mom. A nurse, she figured, could help save others.

Nearly two decades flew by before Collette's new best friend was born. Little Jordyn Grace. She loved her daughter more than anything.

As floodwaters swept through Beaumont on Aug. 29, Collette had loaded the girl into a car seat and tried to escape to higher ground. But the water caught up with them along an Interstate 10 service road. She must have gotten out and tried to carry Jordyn to safety. Must have been swept up in the current.

"Mama was saying her prayers." That's what Jordyn had told a relative that night, hours after rescuers had spotted her pink backpack bobbing in brown water, and plucked her aboard. Mother and child had drifted a half-mile from their car. Nobody knows for sure how long Collette had been dead. Nobody knows what she'd gone through to make sure her daughter lived.

On Saturday, cousin Bo's hands trembled as he stood next to her casket and read from 1 Corinthians: "A mother's love always protects. A mother's love always trusts. A mother's love always perseveres. A mother's love never fails."

The program in his hand called the gathering a "Celebration of Life." Its pages were filled with photos of Jordyn, whose face has now been seen by millions. The little girl who survived. The miracle amidst tragedy.

Different thoughts rush to mind when Bo looks at her dimpled cheeks: She looks like her mother, he thinks, when she was 3.

He thinks about how close he and Collette had been back then, and how distant they'd grown since 2009, when his mother died. He thinks about how, just a couple of months ago, he'd thought about giving his cousin a call, to check in on her. How he'd put it off.

When he looks at Jordyn, he thanks God she survived.

And he regrets not picking up the phone to tell her mother that he loved her, before it was too late.

Tattoo shop raises over \$23,000 for Harvey Victims

[WDBJ](#)

September 18, 2017

COPPERAS COVE, TX. - Three tattoo artist at Chris Bailey's forever tattoos in Copperas Cove held a nine-day tattoo fundraiser earlier this month and raised over \$23,000.

Artist Adam Beaumont has been doing tattoos for 10 years.

His wife has family south of Houston and when hurricane Harvey hit they wanted to do something to help.

"We just felt like we have to contribute something," Beaumont said.

"We don't have bass boats and big trucks to go down there and fish people out of the flooded areas. We have tattoo machines."

They brainstormed the idea and his coworkers Chris Bailey and Chris Martindale were all for it.

The artists created about five Texas designs that people could get for \$50.

They set a goal for the nine days to make about \$2,000.

The posted a video explaining the fundraiser and after about four hours it went viral.

They ended up doing about 500 tattoos and raising \$23,608 for the cause.

They donated the money to J.J Watt's YouCaring fund with hopes they made a difference in someone's life.

Nothing 'Deplorable' About Those Rescuing Harvey, Irma Victims

By Clarence McKee

[Newsmax](#)

September 18, 2017

All Americans can be proud of the countless acts of generosity, heroism, and unselfishness of those rushing to help victims in the aftermath of hurricanes Harvey and Irma.

In Texas, members of the "Cajun Navy" came from Louisiana to help rescue flood victims in Houston. Utility company crews from nearly 30 states rushed to Florida to help restore power to more than six million people, that's 60 percent of the state. And in New York, police and fire department teams went to Florida and Texas, assisting with rescue efforts there. Also, the 106th Rescue Wing of the New York Air National Guard was deployed by New York's Democratic Governor Andrew Cuomo, directing them to these rescue efforts.

These, as well as the valiant work of the U.S. Coast Guard and other members of the military, were just a few of the acts of tireless, unselfish heroism of thousands of Americans expediting assistance to their fellow Americans in distress. No one cared about the race or color of the victims.

As I watched video and viewed pictures of the "Cajun Navy" rescuing blacks and whites from Houston's flood ravaged homes, power company linemen in their trucks queued up ready for dispatch to various communities to restore power after Irma.

Rescue teams from the New York police and fire departments convoyed, assisting in both Texas and Florida, as did members of our military. Yet, I couldn't help but think, that in other circumstances (referring to Hillary Clinton, the Democratic establishment's coastal elites, and much of the hate Trump media; including many of the tuxedoed progressives on display at the Emmy Award ceremony) most of these heroic volunteers would be considered to belong to the "deplorables," that is "racists" and "rednecks," because most of them most likely supported our current president.

Remember when Hillary said " . . . you can put half of Trump supporters into what I call the basket of deplorable . . . racist, sexist, homophobic, xenophobic, Islamophobic . . . " Clinton later said she regretted saying "half."

These likely Trump supporters and heroes are the people who the high brows at ABC and ESP (P for "political") N show contempt for when they fire personalities who make any comments in a pro-conservative vein, like Curt Shilling tweeting about transgender bathrooms or Hank Williams Jr. saying negative things about Barack Obama.

Yet, black liberal ESPN "SportsCenter" anchor Jemele Hill can call the president a "white supremacist," "bigot," and "unfit" for office and still keep her job.

The likely reasons she was not fired is probably because 99 percent of the major network and cable elites share her views. Do ESPN viewers and those heroes of Harvey and Irma? It's highly doubtful.

ABC/ESPN inaction on Ms. Hill reveals that the corporate brass has a similar view — not only on Trump, but also of those who voted for and support him. Supporters and voters —like many of the unsung heroes of the past few weeks.

These network and cable progressive blue bloods can favor and side with Jemele Hill all they want. They do so at the risk of turning off a vast audience of blue collar "deplorables" supportive of Mr. Trump and who were offended by her outrageous comments. Hopefully they will decide that SportsCenter and ES-Political-N is not their cup of viewing tea!

As I recently said on Newsmax TV's "America Talks Live," ESPN should be apologizing to the president. "Hill is getting a pass because she is black and if you are a black liberal you can say anything you want to against anyone on the right . . . ESPN will start to lose viewers . . . just as the NFL has . . ." over the disrespect Colin Kaepernick and others have shown for the national anthem.

Jemele Hill should have been fired!

Be assured that the media and Democratic elitists in New York, Los Angeles, San Francisco, and Washington D.C. bent over backwards to resist commending Trump and Republican governors in Texas and Florida for doing what a Democratic governor did not do in Louisiana's Katrina!

While victims of Harvey and Irma were being rescued and assisted by those whom many progressives and media pundits deplore as rednecks and deplorables, no doubt more than a few of were just looking for federal missteps so they could attack Trump.

In fact, there are those who believe that some of the pundits at MSNBC and CNN, and certain newspapers, would have preferred more loss of life and confusion in federal response so they could use these human tragedies to blame Trump. These are the very low levels both journalism and politics have sunk to in our nation.

You can bet that many in the mainstream media who criticized Trump's so-called lack of empathy and the first lady's shoes would and do not associate with people like those in distress in Texas and Florida — unless they happen to be their housekeeper, driver, hotel maids, lawn tenders, electricians, plumbers, or others they take for granted and — admit it or not — are looked down upon, as did Hillary Clinton.

As we enter the last half of the Atlantic hurricane season, let's hope the day will not come when these anti-Trump elites and their families need to be rescued by Trump's "deplorables."

Clarence V. McKee is president of McKee Communications, Inc., a government, political, and media relations consulting firm in Florida. He held several positions in the Reagan administration as well as in the Reagan presidential campaigns. He is a former co-owner of WTVT-TV in Tampa and former president of the Florida Association of Broadcasters. Read more of his reports — [Go Here Now](#).

Volunteers Needed to Help Distribute Donations to Harvey Victims

By Ben Russell

[NBC-Dallas](#)

September 18, 2017

In the weeks since Hurricane Harvey slammed into the Texas Gulf Coast, and dumped a record-setting amount of rain on cities stretching from Corpus Christi to Houston to Port Arthur, the humanitarian response has been overwhelming and impressive.

For example, the North Texas nonprofit Trusted World, selected by Dallas County as the lone organization to handle the logistics of distributing donations meant to help evacuees and those impacted by Harvey, had to call for an end to donations within a matter of days because of the overwhelming response from the community.

“Due to the incredible generosity of both the North Texas area and the nation as a whole, we are now closing donations,” Trusted World noted on its website. “We want to thank all of you who donated during this time. Because of you, people affected by Hurricane Harvey will receive the supplies they need.”

Trusted World founder and CEO Michael Garrett said he has been impressed and the physical and emotional support so many people have offered.

“The emotional part is watching North Texas and the nation just show up and give,” he said. “We have had people driving in from New Jersey, California, from Wisconsin. They just want to give.”

Garrett oversees the daily operations of a massive 341,000-square foot warehouse in Garland, the floors of which are filled with donated items like diapers, bottled water, clothes and non-perishable food items as far as the eye can see.

The work to sort, divvy up and repack the donations for shipping is largely being done by volunteers, dozens of whom show up unannounced daily.

“It is a common bond that unites us in a situation like this,” Garrett added. “It is a shame that it takes a disaster for that to happen to humanity, but we are watching it up close every single day.”

On Friday, the warehouse floor was alive with activity. In one section, much of the work was being carried out by the Endicott College Women’s Volleyball team from Beverly, Massachusetts. Seventeen players and two coaches were in Dallas for a weekend tournament.

“We hear all the news of what is going on up North. And then you walk in here and it’s just overwhelming,” said Assistant Coach Nicole Trudeau. “It’s an unbelievable undertaking.”

The Division III Gulls, who went undefeated in their three matches here in Dallas, spent their Friday morning sorting donated items prior to a match that evening.

“They can either lay by the pool or go on a tour or something like that, but this is something that is meaningful,” Trudeau said when asked about their volunteering effort. “It helps you as a team when you are facing setbacks on the court. It really brings it home to know there are setbacks and then there are real setbacks.”

Jose Torres is a volunteer who did not travel nearly as far as the volleyball players. The Cedar Hill resident has been at the Trusted World warehouse for a few hours nearly every day since the operation began.

“I wanted to volunteer. I was originally going to go south to Victoria, but I’m not much of a construction worker,” he said with a smile. “What I’ve done is logistics, distribution.”

With his expertise, Torres helped Trusted World design a system that helps to quickly and efficiently process bulk clothing items and get them out the door.

“The scale of this operation is super impressive. I mean it’s big time,” Torres said.

•Bono to Receive 1st Bush Medal for Distinguished Leadership

With as much work as there is that needs to be done, Garrett said Trusted World is in urgent need of many more volunteers. Those who are interested can [click here](#).

Jersey 4 Houston Charity Basketball Game Planned for Sept. 28

By Malik Lyons

[TapIntoFranklin](#)

September 18, 2017

HIGHLAND PARK, NJ - Harvey hit Houston weeks ago, but the recovery will be ongoing.

Community leader Ashton Burell, of Highland Park, will host a charity basketball game dubbed "Jersey 4 Houston" at Highland Park Middle School (HPMS) on Sept. 28, to benefit the many lives impacted by hurricane Harvey. Burell along with Township of Franklin Councilwoman At-Large Shanel Robinson, New Brunswick Council President Glen Fleming, and Community Advocate Tormel Pittman will pool together resources to give aid directly to the people of Houston.

"If you can't make it out to the game you can also bring toiletries, cleaning supplies, first aid supplies, and non-perishable foods to area drop-off locations," Burell said.

Sign Up for E-News

Donors may drop off items from noon to 7 p.m. Tuesday through Saturday at Nu Trendz, 563 Somerset St., Somerset. They can also bring contributions to Franklin's Community Fire Company Station, 710 Hamilton St., Somerset, from 6 to 10 p.m. Monday through Friday. Items are scheduled to be sent out Oct. 5.

HPMS is located at 330 Wayne St, Highland Park, NJ 08904.

Pittman set up a GoFundMe page to receive cash contributions. As of the publication of this article, donations raised total \$1,190 toward his goal of \$7,000.

Renee Zellweger helping Houston animals after Harvey

[ABC13](#)

September 18, 2017

HOUSTON (KTRK) -- Homeward bound! 70 cats and dogs are going on the trip of a lifetime to find their fur-ever homes in California.

Since Hurricane Harvey, local shelters have been packed with more and more animals. So, volunteers with Austin Pets Alive, Houston Pet's Alive, MAD Dog Rescue and Lucy's Pet Foundation are sending animals to California that were in shelters before the hurricane hit.

"It's an emergency situation because there are hundreds being housed and there is no room for any of them and a lot of people lost their homes," said volunteer, Dr. Karen Halligan.

One volunteer made the opposite trip from California to Houston to help out.

"I was in Los Angeles and like everybody, I was just watching it and thinking well what are we going to do?" said Katy native and famous actress, Renee Zellweger.

Zellweger has been helping local rescue groups.

"I'm a Texan and I just wanted to find a place where I could contribute. It didn't feel right to just send a donation. That works and everything but I'm from here so it didn't feel right to just stay home and not be part of a team," said Zellweger

Volunteers are hoping to do six or seven more trips.

For more information on how to help click here. (*Available at link*)

Volunteers Needed At NWA Shelter to Help With Displaced Cats From Hurricane Harvey

[5News-KFSM](#)

September 18, 2017

ROGERS (KFSM) -- Hurricane Harvey not only displaced people, but it wiped at homes for a lot of animals. One organization in Rogers has stepped up to help by rescuing more than 80 cats from Houston over the weekend.

The Outback Cathouse Rescue is owned and operated by The Cat Clinic of Northwest Arkansas. The rescued cats were either from destroyed rescues in Houston, or were surrendered by their owners due to the destruction of their home.

The group is currently looking for volunteers starting on Monday (Sept. 18) to clean, feed and water these cats while they are placed up for adoption. "We're also needing some cat litter. Not scoop-able litter, just regular clay litter," said Jennifer Stallbaumer with the Cat Clinic of NWA. "We also need cat food. We have 85 cats to feed and clean and they're all available for adoption," Stallbaumer said.

The Cat Clinic of Northwest Arkansas is open Monday through Friday from 7 a.m. to 6 p.m., and on Saturday from 8 a.m. to 12 p.m.

J.J. Watt's Hurricane Relief Fundraising Closes at More Than \$37 Million

By Sean Pendergast

[Houston Press](#)

September 18, 2017

It started as a relatively modest (well, relative to where it ended up) organizing of a charitable endeavor, born partially out of a kind heart and partially out of desperation when he couldn't be there to help in person. And in the end, it can be stated with authority — J.J. Watt's charity website to raise money for victims of Hurricane Harvey might be the feel-good story of the year in the NFL.

After opening up the site whose address Houstonians can now recite in their sleep — you caring dot com slash J.J. Watt...you caring dot com slash J.J. Watt...you caring dot com slash J.J. Watt — Watt decided to close things up this past weekend so that he could get on with the business of determining to whom and how the finds will be allocated.

The final tally is staggering...

This Week in Harvey Relief Efforts and Events: Grab a Free Denny's Breakfast and More

By Gwendolyn Knapp

[Houston Press](#)

September 18, 2017

La Table restaurant and Invest Hospitality have formed Hospitality for Houston, a central platform for hospitality professionals across the country who are looking for opportunities to contribute to Hurricane Harvey relief efforts. To date, Hospitality for Houston has raised \$200,000 which will benefit three local Houston organizations: the Houston Food Bank, Kids' Meals, and Recipe for Success. Restaurateurs and chefs who have contributed include Joel Robuchon, Daniel Boulud, Tom Colicchio, and Jonathan Benno.

Bellagreen, formerly known as Ruggles Green, is continuing to support in Houston via a partnership with Texans offensive guard Jeff Allen called "Touchdowns For Houston," which is raising money for rebuilding efforts in the community. Bellagreen is pledging 7.9 percent of sales up to \$7,900 to benefit Touchdowns for Houston and the Houston Food Bank. Visit pledgeit.org/jeff-allen for more information.

Denny's has been offering free breakfast to the Houston area at its mobile kitchen. Catch the mobile kitchen today, September 18 and Tuesday morning, September 19, at The Community of Faith Church, 1024 Pinemont, for a free a.m. meal.

Lee's Creamery in the Heights is donating all proceeds of its Buffalo Bayou flavor to the Greater Houston Community Foundation, available at Petite Sweets and Lee's Fried Chicken and Donuts, ABC13 reports. Petite Sweets will also donate proceeds of its Salty Caramel Macarons sales to the GHCF through September as well.

Wine Above Water, a wine tasting fundraiser at Camerata on September 24, will bring the area's top somms together to raise money for wine professionals who have lost everything in Harvey. \$100 gets attendees exclusive tastings from noon to 8 p.m. with food from local restaurants and numerous vino experts on hand, plus auction items including exclusive culinary experiences. Tickets are available for purchase online through Chris Shepherd's nonprofit Southern Smoke.

Harvey Relief Events

For the next two months, Hugo's, 1600 Westheimer, Caracol, 2200 Post Oak, Backstreet Cafe, 1103 Shepherd, and Xochi, 1777 Walker, will be serving Houston Strong Margaritas, with \$1 per each sold going towards #HarveyRelief.

Helen Greek Food and Wine, 2429 Rice, and Helen in the Heights, 1111 Studewood, will fully comp first responders' meals through Thursday, October 12. After October 12, both locations will give first responders a 25 percent discount on their meals, lasting through the end of the year.

Lucille's, 5512 La Branch, will be hosting a week of festive events, Tuesday, September 19 through Sunday, September 24, to celebrate five years of serving Houston and to give back after Hurricane Harvey. Executive chef-owner Chris Williams is donating 15 percent of all sales from the week to Mayor Sylvester Turner's Hurricane Relief Fund through the Greater Houston Community Foundation. Daily specials include Tuesday's Brunch All Day, a five-course Tour de Bubbles dinner on Wednesday, Thursday's Southern-Inspired Dim Sum dinner, live music and half-price wine on Friday, a Tiki Party & Pig Roast on Saturday, and classic Sunday brunch. Reservations are required for all events. Call 713-568-2505.

Chef Jose Hernandez (Hotel Alessandra's Lucienne & Hotel Sorella's Radio Milano), chef Giancarlo (Amalfi Restaurant), and chef Victor Pucha (of forthcoming Maison Pucha Bistro) host a five course French and Italian dinner on September 24, 5 to 8 p.m., at Radio Milano, with 100 percent of proceeds going to J.J. Watts' Hurricane Flood Relief Fund. \$90 gets you a decadent meal with wine pairings donated by distributor Favorite Brands and Pioneer and curated by somm Joshua Theis. The menu includes a roasted fig salad with San Daniel prosciutto, Pecorino Romano and aged balsamic; pan roasted pheasant; ippoglosso con mousse di broccoli e calamaretti with Alaskan halibut and sauteed baby calamari; carre' d'agnello al pistachio, featuring rack of lamb and truffle scallops, and white and dark chocolate souffle for dessert. Reserve a spot at 713-827-3545.

Smith & Wollensky Houston has extended its Houston Restaurant Weeks offering through September 30, and will also match every \$5 donation add-on guests make during their HRW lunch or dinner, with donations going straight to the Houston Food Bank.

Four Seasons Hotel Houston is donating all proceeds from any Jim Beam house products purchased at Bayou & Bottle from Sunday, September 24 to Saturday, September 30 to Mayor Turner's Hurricane Harvey Relief Fund. Both hotel restaurants (Bayou & Bottle and Quattro) are participating in the extension of Houston Restaurant Weeks until September 30, and will match all Houston Food Bank proceeds from the month of September and will donate this additional money to Mayor Turner's Hurricane Harvey Relief Fund.

Area Firefighters Helped Rescue Hundreds in Hurricane Harvey Aftermath

By Karen Butterfield
[Missourian](#)
September 18, 2017

Area firefighters and community members were part of the Missouri Task Force 1 (MO-TF1) that helped evacuate and rescue nearly 400 people and many pets in the wake of Hurricane Harvey.

The Category 4 hurricane hit the Gulf Coast Friday, Aug. 25.

MO-TF1 is one of 28 Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) urban search and rescue task forces in the country. It's sponsored by the Boone County Fire Protection District.

Task force members from Union include Jeremy Lasswell, Jake Heller, Mark Strubberg and Justin Hidritch, all who are employed by the Union Fire Protection District, as well as Kevin Wissmann and Dale Straatmann.

From the St. Clair Fire Protection, Tim Ware and Billy Williams also participated.

The men served in a variety of roles, including logistics, ground support and as part of the rescue team.

Their deployment to Texas lasted 13 days beginning Aug. 24. The men were a part of a Type III team, which has 35 members and 10 ground support personnel.

"There was a lot of water damage and heavy flooding," Lasswell said, adding that being a part of the team allowed him an opportunity to help people during their worst times.

"For most people, this is the worst day they've experienced, and it was an opportunity to use the skills we've learned and to come together to help them out," he said.

Heller, who has been on two previous MO-TF1 deployments, said helping in Texas was different due to the number of people impacted.

"Houston has a higher population than the entire state of Missouri," he noted.

Water was coming down so fast that emergency workers couldn't get it out of the levee reservoirs fast enough, he added.

The area where the team was stationed, near Katy, Texas, was hit with more than 50 inches of rain.

Motivation, Thanks

Members said they were motivated to join the team simply to help others.

"When I started my career in the fire service, I wanted to get a good foundation of fire knowledge before expanding out into a specialty," Hidritch said. "I was a natural fit for search and rescue and I found it enjoyable from the mental aspect. It's a mental challenge to solve problems and figure out the best way to help people."

Team members thanked everyone who made their deployment possible.

“We’re fortunate at Union Fire to have really good support from administration and command staff, who work to get us out the door and take care of daily operations here while we’re out with the force,” Strubberg said, adding that the men’s families also are understanding and take care of everything while they’re away.

“It’s a huge deal for our families,” Lasswell said. “We couldn’t do this without our families being so willing and our (place of employment) working with us. Union Fire has been exceptional in making sure we can attend training and deployments when we need to.”

They also thanked department members who aren’t on the task force for stepping up and backfilling their positions while they were out.

“It wasn’t just us working 20- and 22-hour days,” Heller said. “Everyone stepped up to fill in, and that’s huge.”

In all, through the Union Fire Protection District, eight of 15 paid staff and four volunteers are on the task force. Members are deployed by their availability and as needed for disasters.

MISCELLANEOUS

Fire Department’s Harvey Staffing Criticized

[KURV](#)

September 17, 2017

Thousands of Houston firefighters were told to stay home at the height of Harvey’s flooding. Marty Lancton, president of the Houston firefighters union, said through tears in an interview Friday with television station KHOU that the department could have done more during the storm. He says that on Sunday, Aug. 27, as fast-rushing water chased people onto their rooftops, about 3,000 firefighters were instructed not to report to work, an agonizing order for many eager to assist with rescues.

The decision left 900 firefighters responsible for 650 square miles of Houston, and many worked two or three days without a break. Houston Fire Chief Sam Pena acknowledges that three-quarters of the force was asked not to report, but says that the department was fully staffed.

What if America Had a Detective Agency for Disasters?

[Wired](#)

September 18, 2017

The commissions are coming. Hurricane season hasn’t ended, but forensics waits for no one, so the after-action reports on Harvey and Irma have to get started. The relevant agencies—local and perhaps federal, plus maybe some national academies and disaster responders—will all no doubt look at themselves and others to see what went right or wrong. Was Houston right not to evacuate? Was Florida right to evacuate? What led to Florida’s electrical outage? Is Houston’s flood control infrastructure tough enough to withstand climate change-powered storm surges?

That's as it should be. The science of disaster prediction and response only gets a few laboratories a year, and extracting lessons from them is a big job. Big enough, in fact, that the sheer number of reports can mean those lessons get lost. So Scott Knowles, a historian at Drexel University who studies disasters, has an idea: a federal agency whose job it is to centrally organize that detective work and get the word out. A National Disaster Investigation Board.

Stipulated, this idea would be a tough sell even if the Trump administration wasn't anti-agency and anti-regulation. But just playing with the notion says something about what people do and don't learn from disasters. "It's an index of what a total nerd I am that this is a thrilling idea," Knowles says. "We have all these agencies that we spend a fair amount of money on who do this work, but what's missing is a technically sophisticated cop who can come in and say, 'this worked, this didn't, this was a repeat, this is an area for research.' And then put a report out and have it be interesting, so there's press."

As a model, Knowles cites agencies like the National Transportation Safety Board, but also pop-up commissions like the one after the space shuttle Challenger exploded, or the 9/11 Commission. Both were riveting. The Rogers Commission, investigating the Challenger, had that thundering moment when Richard Feynman put an O-ring in ice water to show that cold made it brittle, the technical cause of the shuttle's explosion. The 9/11 final report, controversial though it remains, was a bestseller and finalist for the National Book Award—and led to sweeping changes to the United States intelligence and military. That power to effect real, lasting change would be critical to the NDIB's success.

So what would the NDIB actually do? Disasters are "multiple interlocking problems," as Knowles says. The Fukushima Dai-Ichi meltdown was a human-made disaster that resulted from a natural one, a tsunami. The Challenger O-ring failed, but the decision to launch was a management failure. So the first task might be to figure out what problems to unlock. For Harvey and Houston, that might be evacuation communication and dealing with toxic sites. For Irma it might be the electrical grid.

Public, possibly even televised hearings might be another component. They'd recruit public pressure to make necessary changes, and also have a naming-and-shaming component. The post-Katrina study did that. "They said, look, the Coast Guard did well and everybody else failed," Knowles says. "That was a spur at FEMA that produced pretty significant changes and led to legislation."

And, as a colleague of Knowles' suggested when he tossed out the idea of the NDIB on Twitter, the investigation should include people from among the affected. That'd give it a social science aspect, but also help make sure its findings represented the widest possible constituency.

So as long as we're dreaming up mythical science detective agencies, who should be the stars of CSI: Disaster? "If we're going to get serious about building this up as a body of expertise with policy juice, I think you have to have a standing body with people committed to it, and professional staff," Knowles says. He suggests people like fire protection engineers, the cranky people in the back of the room who know what's unsafe and aren't afraid to say so, but can also navigate legal systems.

Knowles thought ex-FEMA administrators might be great at the job, like James Lee Witt or Craig Fugate. "He's setting himself up as a kind of policy analyst, and having been a FEMA administrator he's way qualified to walk into Houston and say what he's worried about."

So I pinged Fugate. What does he think about a federal disaster investigation team? "It's a good idea, but will be resisted by FEMA and others. A formal review by outside experts not subject to the agencies under review will be key," Fugate says. But he adds that you'd still want to somehow integrate the views and actions of local, state, and private sector actors. And they're "not likely to volunteer unless required by law."

Short of starting up a Legion of Super-Heroes-style Science Police Force, that seems unlikely.

Worse, an NDIB might be redundant. “After Ebola, there were at least 20 after-action commissions to study what happened and what went wrong,” says Larry Brilliant, chair of the Skoll Global Threats Fund and a pandemic fighter since his days on the World Health Organization team that eradicated smallpox. (Brilliant also cofounded the lynchpin internet community The Well.) Brilliant was on at least one of the commissions himself. “It’s not that there’s any absence of intentionality,” he says.

A bigger problem: “There’s no such thing as a ‘disaster,’” Brilliant says. A famine is not a flood is not an explosion is not a refugee crisis is not a disease outbreak. “Each one has its own particular ways to screw up.”

Corporate forces would resist this new agency even harder than anti-bureaucratic ones. The FIRE sector—the finance, insurance, and real estate industries—has become the biggest contributor to federal-level political campaigns. That lobby doesn’t want to hear about uninsuring coastlines or rezoning wilderness. “I call them the lending complex,” Knowles says. “They’re going to push back on this because they think we should be able build anyplace—wildland interface, Jersey Shore, wherever.”

But whether all those objections make a standing Federal agency with investigative powers a terrible idea (because it’d be redundant) or a great idea (because it’d clarify) isn’t clear. “Almost anything would be better than what we have now, which is duplicative studies and some Senate committee, and the stuff just goes on a shelf,” Knowles says. “Studies are going to happen. We may as well innovate around how they’re done, because they’re going to get more and more expensive.” And so are the disasters.

The mental health impact of major disasters like Harvey and Irma

[Steamboat Today](#)

September 17, 2017

When major disasters like Hurricanes Harvey and Irma hit, the first priority is to keep people safe. This process can involve dramatic evacuations, rescues and searches.

However, after the initial emergency passes, a much longer process of recovering and rebuilding begins. For individuals, families and communities, this can last months or even years. This work often begins at the same time as the national media starts packing up and public attention shifts to the next major news story.

At the University of Missouri's Disaster and Community Crisis Center, we study disaster recovery, rebuilding and resilience. Much of our research shows that natural disasters can have a meaningful impact on survivors' mental and behavioral health. These issues typically emerge as people try to recover and move forward after the devastation.

Health and disasters

Immediately after a natural disaster, it's normal to experience fear, anxiety, sadness or shock. However, if these symptoms continue for weeks to months following the event, they may indicate a more serious psychological issue.

The disaster mental health problem most commonly studied by psychologists and psychiatrists is post-traumatic stress disorder, which can occur after frightening events that threaten one's own life and the lives for family and friends.

Following a disaster, people might lose their jobs or be displaced from their homes. This can contribute to depression, particularly as survivors attempt to cope with loss related to the disaster. It's not easy to lose sentimental possessions or face economic uncertainties. People facing these challenges can feel hopeless or in despair.

Substance use can increase following disasters, but usually only for individuals who already used tobacco, alcohol or drugs before the disaster. In a study of Hurricane Katrina survivors who had been displaced to Houston, Texas, approximately one-third reported increasing their tobacco, alcohol and marijuana use after the storm.

There's also evidence that domestic violence increases in communities experiencing a disaster. After Hurricane Katrina, another study found that, among women in Mississippi who were displaced from their homes, domestic violence rates increased dramatically. Perpetrators may feel a loss of control following the disaster and turn to abusive behavior to try to gain that control back in their personal relationships.

Disaster recovery

While many disaster survivors show resilience, studies have shown mental and behavioral health issues cropping up weeks, months and even years after a disaster.

Rebuilding can be a long process, with a series of ups and downs. Survivors may bounce back after a few months, or they may experience ongoing stressors, such as financial issues or problems finding permanent housing. Disaster anniversaries or other reminders – like a heavy rainstorm months after a hurricane – may also trigger reactions.

In addition, early disaster recovery efforts often focus on physical reconstruction. Psychological recovery may end up on the back burner.

Individuals and organizations working to help disaster survivors need to remember that disasters can affect many aspects of survivors' lives. As a result, several different community systems need to be working together as part of recovery efforts.

Researchers sometimes call the multi-agency disaster response and recovery network that is needed to help individuals cope with a disaster a "system of care." A disaster system of care will include disaster groups like FEMA and Red Cross. It should also involve agencies representing public health, mental health, schools, local government, social services, local businesses and workforce development, faith-based organizations and local media.

For example, combating domestic violence after a disaster will require collaboration among disaster organizations, domestic violence groups, law enforcement, local media and more. Resources intended to help women and families experiencing domestic violence – such as legal aid or transportation assistance – should be included in disaster response programs.

Communities should also help disaster survivors get reconnected: to their friends and family, to new people in the community and to the place they may be temporarily staying while displaced. Social capital and support may be the most important resources for individuals coping with disasters. Community

events, such as neighborhood dinners, might help foster connections. Social media platforms can help bring together neighbors who are displaced and waiting to return home.

Finally, a variety of mental health interventions – such as psychological first aid, crisis counseling and cognitive behavioral therapy – can help those who have experienced a disaster. These programs can be delivered through many community systems, including mental health agencies, schools and more.

As a result of Hurricane Harvey, 600 more Texas prisoners getting AC

By Jolie McCullough

[KHOU](#)

September 18, 2017

NAVASOTA, Texas -- Thanks to Hurricane Harvey, about 600 more Texas prisoners are set to get a break from the sweltering Texas heat.

The inmates had been evacuated from the flood-prone Stringfellow Unit ahead of the storm. But Texas prison officials, scrambling to get the inmates to safety, sent them to the notoriously hot (though dry) Wallace Pack Unit in Navasota.

Once there, a judge ruled, the prisoners were made eligible to join a special class of heat-sensitive inmates subject to a federal lawsuit over hot conditions that have been blamed for nearly two dozen deaths over the last two decades. The Texas Department of Criminal Justice will now have to find cooler beds for them.

"The risk of harm to these individuals when they are housed in dangerously hot areas has not changed," federal Judge Keith Ellison wrote in his order, which was made public Friday.

Department of Criminal Justice lawyers had requested that the temporary order be lifted for these prisoners because they were evacuated to the Pack Unit in an emergency situation. Ellison denied the request. Department spokesman Jason Clark said sending them to the Pack Unit was appropriate given the other options as Harvey was bearing down on the Houston area.

The non-air-conditioned prison in Navasota had largely been emptied because of the federal court's July order to move any medically vulnerable inmates at the prison into temperatures that remain below 88 degrees.

"The alternative was for buses to pass the near empty facility and continue on dangerous roadways and place those offenders in another facility's gymnasium," Clark said in an emailed statement. "We stand by our decision to keep offenders out of harm's way."

Inmates return to the Texas Department of Criminal Justice's Ramsey and Terrell units from the Estelle Unit on Sept. 16. Prisoners were evacuated from state prisons in Brazoria County during flooding from Hurricane Harvey. Texas Department of Criminal Justice

Jeff Edwards, lead attorney for the plaintiffs, said the department moved the inmates into the Pack Unit "without regard to their medical conditions or their heat vulnerability."

"The consequence of TDCJ violating the court's order is that another 600 heat vulnerable inmates will no longer be endangered by the high temperatures," Edwards said. "They did it with full knowledge that they were violating the court order."

The judge's ruling came just as most of the Texas inmates who were evacuated from flooded prison grounds are being sent back to their original units this weekend. All told, about 6,000 prisoners were evacuated to escape Harvey's wrath. About 1,400 were already sent back to the Vance and Jester 3 units last Monday.

The 600 heat-sensitive inmates sent to the Pack Unit — including the elderly, obese and diabetic — were among more than 1,000 evacuees from the Stringfellow unit in Brazoria. Ironically, Stringfellow isn't air-conditioned, either, but it doesn't have the cursed status of the Pack Unit.

Not yet, anyway.

Almost 75 percent of Texas prisons and state jails have no air conditioning in the inmates' living areas, and at some prisons, like the Pack Unit, temperatures regularly get above 100 degrees, according to the judge's July ruling. The lawsuit filed by prisoners at the Pack Unit cites at least 23 heat-related deaths in Texas prisons since 1998 and argues that housing should be kept at a maximum of 88 degrees. The lawsuit covers all Pack unit inmates, regardless of their length of stay.

In a scathing July order, Ellison said TDCJ was "deliberately indifferent" to the risk of harm the inmates at the sweltering prison face. Because of the ruling, more than 1,000 inmates housed at the prison were moved in August to 11 other prisons with air conditioning.

TDCJ has appealed the court's July order and says the department does enough to combat the heat without providing air-conditioning in housing areas, such as unlimited ice water, personal fans and air-conditioned "respite" areas in the prisons where inmates can go to escape the heat.

Watch out for flood-damaged vehicles when buying a used car

[Global Mail](#)

September 18, 2017

They say public speaking is most people's greatest fear. Right after that must be buying a used car. It can be a harrowing journey. The old stereotypes are ever-present. Predatory curbside salespeople peddling bad product. Unsuspecting buyers whose dream cars turn into lemons seconds after they leave the lot. Weird mark-ups, undetected damage, trouble with the title – these are all pitfalls that unwary drivers can fall into.

Now there's another factor to consider: flood damage.

Hurricane Harvey has done its worst, causing carnage and suffering. The automotive side to the catastrophe is that an estimated 500,000 to 600,000 flood-damaged vehicles will be write-offs, according to Solera Holdings Inc., a data company based in Westlake, Texas. There have already been 100,000 claims for vehicle flood damage. It's a heavy hit for a city in which 94 per cent of the adult population drives.

Most flood-damaged vehicles are considered total losses by insurance companies. Sustained water damage causes rust and destroys computer and electrical systems. It can warp brakes and rotors and lead

to airbag malfunction. Flood damage can corrode the exhaust system and can cause transmission failure. The "car plus flood equals bad news" list is endless.

Once a car is deemed ruined, it is sent to a salvage yard so any undamaged parts can be re-purposed.

Of course, where there's calamity, there's criminal opportunity. Flood fraudsters don't waste time. As soon as soggy vehicles can be dried out, they're shipped off to other parts of the country and sold – with nary a mention of their nautical past – to what used to be known as "suckers." According to the vehicle history database company Carfax, 271,404 flood-damaged cars were on American roads in 2016. Guess which state had the most? Texas, with 43,000. Car grifters hide any information connected to a vehicle's watery past. They engage in "title washing" by erasing a car's history or by leaving any alarming facts off the sheet.

Between Hurricane Harvey and Hurricane Irma, the market is bound to get "flooded" with more watery automobiles. It's possible that some of these lemons will end up in Canada. After all, flood-damaged cars made their way here after Hurricane Katrina in 2005 and Hurricane Sandy in 2012.

So, what can a consumer do?

Go to a reputable used car dealer. Established dealers play the long game. They want happy customers who come back, not fleeced marks who hold a grudge. Someone who is passing off flood-damaged cars is going for the quick kill. They're going to pressure you to buy fast. There will be some hyped-up story explaining why the car is so cheap. If you don't act now you'll lose it. There may be the inference of the transaction being a little less than legit (no tax, cash only). The best way to ensure a mark doesn't go to the police is to have them engage in criminal behavior.

Inspect the vehicle. Look for mold and mildew. Despite the best efforts of fraudsters, flood-damaged cars often smell like the bottom of a stale pond. Check under the mats, under the car, look for moisture in the headlights and in the instrument panel. Feel for damp spots and look for water stains. By far, the most reliable method is to check its history. Use a vehicle history company to find out if the car has been in any deep water. You can find detailed advice on how to avoid flood-damaged vehicles online.

When in doubt, keep in mind the adage, "If a deal on a used car is too good to be true, it probably spent a week submerged in water."

SOCIAL LISTENING

Hurricane Harvey – Social Listening Report – 9/18/17 1500 CST

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This report is being distributed to the 4332 Joint Field Office, FEMA External Affairs at Headquarters and Region 6, FEMA Office of Response and Recovery, Red Cross, USCG, and HHS/ASPR.

Summary: The conversation as it relates to Hurricane Harvey has declined with mostly just repeats of similar conversations. Debris removal continues to be an issues with survivors posting images and videos of how bad it still looks. The Port Aransas area is making great efforts towards rebuilding their community with more and more business reopening daily. Some Local residents are angry and are posting an issue with another local resident scamming people and agencies out money because of Harvey.

Report sections

- [FEMA Conversation](#)
- [Operations](#)
- [Public Perception](#)
- [Rumors/Misinformation](#)

FEMA Conversation

A survivor shared a FEMA fact sheet discussing the [clean and removal assistance](#) is gaining low but positive reactions.

Low conversation surrounds a woman who has been [scamming different people and agencies](#) to receive relief even though she does not need it.

- Some commenters are suggesting that FEMA should be made aware of this and other non-profit agencies know so they do not grant her money that could have been used for people who really need it.

Operations

RECOVERY:

- As of 08:04 CST today, the Nueces County Office of Emergency Management [announced](#) that the state of Texas expanded Disaster Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program aid to Aransas, Brazoria, Calhoun, Nueces, Polk, Refugio and San Patricio counties starting September 18 or 19.
- A local Corpus Christi news outlet video displaying the [Port Aransas residents rebuilding](#) their tourism city is receiving a lot of positive reactions and engagement from local and non-local residents.

PRIVATE SECTOR

As of today at 9:05 CST, Harris County Precinct 1 Constable Distribution Center will be [closed and reopened on tomorrow at 10:00 am](#).

Public Perception

- A survivor posted an image that looks like a [graveyard of debris in Dickson, TX](#) is gaining low attention but sad reactions from local residents.
- A relative of a local Vidor resident posted a [video of the devastation](#) discussing that 80% of the residents are not receiving funds from insurance because they claim the damage is from flooding and not the hurricane.
 - The post is receiving a lot views and shocked reactions from both the public and local residents
 - The engagements are all negative from the public stating that this is pay back because they believe the residents in Vidor are all mostly apart of the white supremacy.